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Cover picture: Whistler, *Home Valley, NSW*, reproduced from *Life in Australia*, the Australian way of life depicted by thirty-eight of Australia's leading photographers, which was published by Collier's Press in 1971.

Measuring up to the age and place

Howard Jacobson on recent Australian fiction, and a precarious victory of boldness over "whimsy and minimalism".

Yes, Patrick White is modern; but is he adequate? And how can a man adequately interpret the activity of his age when he is not in sympathy with it? Think of the varied, the abundant, the wide spectacle of Australian life of his day; think of its fullness of occupation, its energy of effort. From these Patrick White withdraws himself, and bids his disciples to withdraw themselves... but there is no peace, no cheerfulness for him either in the world from which he comes, or in the solitude to which he goes. With stern effort, with gloomy despair, he seems to rive his eyes on the elementary reality, the naked framework of the world, because the world in its fullness and movement is too exciting a spectacle for his discomposed brain... Patrick White is, therefore, overstrained, gloom-weighted, morbid; and he who is morbid is no adequate interpreter of his age.

Of course, no one actually wrote that about Patrick White. The words are Matthew Arnold's and the gloomy withdrawer he is properly describing is Lucretius. Which therefore means that we are in ancient Rome, not contemporary Australia. But the transposition is not fantastical. "Life in Australia seemed to be for many people pretty deadly dull", Patrick White himself said in an interview in *Southerly* in 1972; "I have tried to convey a splendour, a transcendence, which is also there above human realities." For transcendence read naked framework, making allowances for spiritual conceits; for life in Australia seeming to be pretty deadly dull read gloom-weighted and morbid, recalling the rough treatment meted out in White's fiction and non-fiction to those who can find their way, or take their pleasures, in the material world.

This is not to be an article about Patrick White. But such is the long shadow he has cast over modern Australian writing that even a critic must pass through it before he finds the light. In thinking of Patrick White as Lucretius, the issue is not the quality of his genius but the nature of his influence, how far other writers have learnt from him to be unimpressed - as it were on principle; as a sign of their writerly good faith - by the activity of their age. How not to have the stomach for it.

For if Patrick White fits the bill as Lucretius, Australia surely does no worse a job of standing in for Rome. We might go further and insist



Maude Winifred Sherwood's watercolour "William goes to Work (Melbourne)" was sold for £3,600 at Christie's sale of topographical pictures on October 29.

that variety and abundance, fullness of occupation and energy of effort - the effort to enjoy no less than the energy to strive - are only the start of what constitutes the Australian "spectacle" today. This is not the place to extend the list. Suffice it to say that it is not just the coming birthday party that can explain the intense interest Australia is taking in itself right now, let alone the fascination it continues to hold for distant continents. Robert Hughes's book *The Fatal Shore* (reviewed in the TLS, January 23) might owe its original conception and timing to that event, without necessarily being compromised by it; but the other significant Australian non-fiction epic of recent years - John Bryson's *Evil Angels* (1986), chronic-

ing as a saga of the national conscience the aftermath of Azaria Chamberlain's death - is ripped from the very belly of the beast, raw meat never intended for any festive kebab. Both those books, however much one might miss in them the irresponsibility and improvisational flair of the novelist, none the less threaten to wrest the high ground of imaginative interpretation from Australian writers of fiction. They endorse the events of the last 200 years like a pair of proprietorial brackets, keeping out those who would dip their toes only gingerly into the great Australian mythology. To return to Arnold's challenging concept of "adequacy", they reinforce the argument that there is a tumultuous society out there, or,

if you would prefer, *in* there, which Australian writers are obliged to be adequate to.

And if one were to go only on the evidence of the short Australian fiction published recently, one would conclude that they aren't rising with much ardour to that challenge. Just why a country so vast should specialize in stories so small is a mystery it is not within the scope of this review to explore. The case usually made for their proliferation finds the form originating in an isolated people's hunger for news, for word of home or simply somewhere else, which would be satisfied at last by bush gossip, yarns, exaggerations, droll fantasies spun at the bar or around a camp-fire by expertly laconic (where, after all, was the hurry?) bullshit artists. Which lineage would be convincing if the child showed some trace of its grandparents' vitality. As it is, there is not much that reminds one of basic convivial narration in most modern Australian short stories; little of the competence required to engage the attention of a noisy gathering; and small taste for the ordinary vulgarity and invention that spices successful gossip. "My mother was a magger", is the opening line of Carmel Bird's *The Woodpecker Toy Fact*, but the word magger has to be asterisked - "The magpie is the scandal-monger of the woods. The verb 'to mag' meaning 'to gossip' derives from magpie" - thereby distancing us at once from those earlier arts and preparing us for their metamorphosis, their academic cutification into that mock child-wise fantasizing which is the last resort of the newbard. "One day I am going to know everything about everything... I will know what sorrow is made from, what constitutes joy. I will have conversations with the sage of Zurich, after-noon ten with Chagall in his garden..."

Try making a story-starved outstation ring to that. Whimsy, especially scorpion-whimsy with a deadly little sting in its tail, has been given a new currency by the success of Elizabeth Jolley's sinisterly spinsterly novels, and the Australian short story - invariably supported by a grant and then applauded by a prize - is looking decidedly peakish in the face of its advance. Anyone anxious for its health, therefore, should welcome such signs of vigour as are to be found, for example, in Angelo Loukakis's *Vernacular Dreams*. No gossip-monger of private fantasy in this volume. Loukakis's tales tell mainly of the disappoint-

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J. L. G. (London, TLS 24 Aug. 1986)

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PAUL DELANY
The Neo-pagans: Friendship and love in the Rupert Brooke circle
270pp. Macmillan. £14.95.
0334475217

We begin to have a new Rupert Brooke myth, although the old one lives on. He remains extraordinarily well known; it is hard to imagine that the centenaries of Ismar Rosenberg (1894) or Wilfred Owen (1893), for example, will receive anything like the attention that has been paid to Brooke's this year. The old myth is still serving the nation, not for the moment as a recruiting and but as a tourist attraction. The new one will probably keep its distance from Gloucester, where disappointment at the church clock is unlikely to be counterbalanced by a glimpse of the room in the Orchard where, as Paul Delany now reveals, Brooke initiated himself into sex (by tumbling a fellow-Buckingham). Rugby School and town have put on a good show this summer, with a first-rate exhibition, a well-attended symposium, a revival of Brooke's only play, and other events. One cannot be so complimentary about his old publishers, Sidgwick and Jackson, who have reproduced *Letters from America* and the 1942 edition of the *Collected Poems* by some process that muddies the text and preserves misprints (including "GRANDCHIEF" in large capitals). The poems are embellished with an introduction by Gavin Fawcett which does its best not to damn with faint praise; crisp new page numbers; a new, dimly illegible title-page; and a wretched version of one of the famous photographs. Copies of earlier editions, still easily available, are a better buy.

The old myth, which was defined by Churchill in his Times obituary, Edward Marsh in the memoir which still prefaces the *Collected Poems*, and Henry James in his barely readable introduction to *Letters from America*, is a part of British history. We take its original impact for granted, but little research has been done on it. Did it affect the Other Ranks, for example? Was it helped along by officialdom? Paul Delany shrewdly notes in *The Neo-pagans* that Churchill the eulogist was still Churchill the politician, acutely aware that the troops of his Gallipoli expedition were landing when the obituary appeared and that the public's attention had to be drawn away from Flanders, where the Germans had first used poison gas on the day before Brooke died. Marsh, as Churchill's secretary, may have had a hand in the obituary, and James passionately identified himself with the national effort. Now that we know so much more about Brooke and so much less about the immediate demands of 1914-18, these old idealizations seem little short of ridiculous, but they remain historically significant.

Timothy Rogers's *Rupert Brooke: A reappraisal and selection* (1971) gave a much better informed view and would be well worth reprinting, but instead we are offered a "Centenary Edition" of the poems, with an introduction by Rogers that summarizes his earlier work. No doubt this cheaply produced paperback was a last-minute job, as centenary volumes often are, but it is frustrating not to have more of Rogers's scarcely rivalled knowledge of Brooke. What, for example, are his "reservations" about Geoffrey Keynes's dating of the poems, or, crucially, his evidence for saying that the 1914 sonnets were conceived before Brooke saw the effects of war at Antwerp? His choice of poems is influenced by his dislike of the early Decadent work: he omits four pieces from the *Collected Poems* and a further twenty from Keynes's edition of the *Poetical Works* (1946), but adds ten from his own 1971 selection and other published

sources. The "hitherto unpublished poems", advertised on the front and back of the cover, turn out to be four very minor bits of light verse, one of which is a useful reminder that Brooke was a Socialist (a fact still ignored by people who like to savage him, absurdly, as typical of the ruling class).

Those in the know have always said that Keynes, as editor of the letters (1968) and senior trustee, suppressed whatever might interfere with his and the public's image of Brooke ("by far the most wonderful person I have ever known", he told Delany). The official biographer, Christopher Hassall, deferred to his censorship and is alleged to have fudged evidence here and there. Keynes's death inevitably heralded a change. John Lehmann's brief biography (1980) foreshadowed revelations to come, and now in *The Neo-pagans*, Delany has kept into the manuscripts as a swimmer into uncleanness, coming up with matter that would not, as Brooke once remarked, "look well in a biography". Delany is the author of a detailed study of D. H. Lawrence in wartime, and his Brooke is, as he points out, a little like Lawrence, being a bisexual or repressed homosexual, mother-dominated, alternately hating and fraternizing with homosexuals, agonizing over relationships and physically, and falling in and out of love with women, to their injury and his torment. The new Rupert Brooke belongs to the modern age; he is a cousin of his namesake, Rupert Birkin, and a descendant of those Hardy characters who suffered from "the modern spirit". Sitting naked on the grass, earnestly discussing youth, love and sex, he and his friends seem harbingers of the 1960s. His disastrous affair with Ka Cox seems to have produced a stillborn child (there is also a faint but plausible possibility that even now the great-grandchildren of "Pupure" and Mamma play in the Samson surf, well this side of Paradise).

Delany is an academic, with an impressive range of published and unpublished sources. His book is an illuminating study of the small circle of friends who camped, bathed and talked together before Brooke went into London society. However, the group was hardly long-lived or intellectually substantial enough to merit a serious label; when Delany sets them against "the Bloomsbury Group", "the Neo-pagans" seem "like coloured shadows", although they were hopeful and energetic for a little while. One's doubts are not helped by Delany's tendency to sensationalize, revealed in his subheadings ("Virginia Takes an Interest", "Getting Stuffed", "Looking for the Exit") and sometimes in his use of evidence (for example, he asserts that before Dean Inge's famous sermon a man "jumped up to make a passionate denunciation of the war, and had to be dragged away", but this seems to be an embroidered version of the original *Times* report, which gives only "rose to his

feet" for "jumped up", "loud" for "passionate", and "quickly escorted outside" for "had to be dragged away"). In helping to demolish a myth, Delany risks contributing to another.

Much still needs to be done, if the new Brooke is not to become as much a fiction as the old. Before anything else, there should be a genuinely complete, annotated edition of the poems and fragments, and an honest selection from the letters, many of which are still unpublished. Delany covers only a few years of Brooke's life but gives plenty of new material, so there is a case for yet another biography, if only for an exceptionally good one. He is not primarily concerned with Brooke the poet, about whom fresh thought is long overdue. It is time to look again at Georgian poetry and at Brooke the "elder brother" of his generation, as Graves described him, looked up to by all young poets. Like Owen and Sassoon, he had his roots in the Decadence and cannot be understood if that origin is not taken into account. The war sonnets need to be reconsidered not only as key documents of their period but also as developments, rather than aberrations, from his earlier work. There are passages in *Letters from America* about the dead living on in landscape, and one whole article is about the movement of water at Niagara.

In such places, one is aware, with an almost insupportable yet comforting certitude, that both men and nations are hurried onwards to their ruin or ending as inevitably as this dark flood. Some go down to it unreluctant, and meet it, like the river, not without mobility. And as incessant, as inevitable, and as unavailing as the spray that hangs over the Falls, is the white cloud of human crying.

There, if you before the war, is the voice of the 1914 sonnets ("Nobleness walks in our ways again; / And we have come into our heritage") and of the Decadent ("We shall go down with unreluctant tread / Rose-crowned into the darkness"), although Brooke typically undercuts it by adding that it comes from "the plutitudinous heart". It does come from the heart, though, like all his writing about water. His sense of flow is evident in his fondness for composing in lists, the best of them handled with inimitable skill, fixing the moment for ever as the poured tea becomes solid amber in mid-air. Mocking the "Struggling, irregular, perplexed, embossed" shape of the human body, he imagines that the perfect relationship might be between two spheres, or envies the fish, smooth and isolated as a sphere, complete in its own "cool, curving world". His poetry is more interesting than has usually been allowed - the new myth must not be allowed to divert attention from that. Nor must it be allowed to suppress Brooke the humorist and friend. Cruel and demanding though he sometimes was, everyone remembered him as a figure of laughter and delight: had we known him, our memories would not have been different.

Doubly recollected

Christopher Hawtree

JOHN LEHMANN
Christopher Isherwood: A personal memoir
150pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.
0297791796

"This animated and stringent conversationalist always seems to me to put on a morning coat to write", wrote Cyril Connolly of the late John Lehmann's account of the Sitwells' lives, work and warfare. *Christopher Isherwood: A personal memoir* brings to mind the shroud, for Death, alas, does not always strike from out of the blue, and the beating of its wings is to be heard throughout this book. As well as drawing on *Christopher and His Kind*, it comprises, in the main, already published material from Lehmann's three autobiographies, from an essay for the Isherwood number of the *Twentieth-Century Literature*, and from *Thrown to the Walls* (an unfortunate title, suggested by Connolly).

The past, which was a stimulus to Isherwood, for Lehmann appears a preoccupation. Slightly narrated and profusely self-adjudicated, his memoir does not make fresh either the tragedy of Isherwood's thum Heinz or the distilling, via incarnations of *New Writing*, of "The Lost" into the Berlin novels. With Isherwood's arrival in California, and the fuelling and draining of his energies by Hollywood and Vedanta, some nerve is gained. One is left impatient for the publication of those Isherwood diaries which chronicle the other side of the period covered by *My Guru and His Disciples*. (Mention is made of a collaboration with Aldous Huxley on a script about a faith-healer, *Jacob's Hands*, which was duly cancelled for fear of upsetting the medical profession.)

Meanwhile, it is a pity that a book compiled in adversity should now have been published at all. So ramshackle is it that one might forget that Lehmann, like Connolly, did write a book that retains its interest and more: the wartime *Politic New Writing in Europe*, whose perspective is broader than these subsequent recollections of one small aspect of the 1930s, so much of which has proved less edifying than the outward frivolity of Noël Coward and John Betjeman. As well as familiar photographs, the volume does include some affecting drawings by Don Bachardy of Isherwood during his last months.

Witness to a tragedy

Tapan Raychaudhuri

NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI
My Hand, Great Anarchy: India 1921-1952
979pp. Chatto and Windus. £25.
070124768
The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian
506pp. Hogarth Press. Paperback, £7.95.
0701208007

When Nirad C. Chaudhuri published his *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* in 1951, he was not exactly unknown in India. He had made his literary debut in Calcutta in the late 1920s. By the mid-1930s he was acknowledged as an incisive if highly abrasive critic and a man of formidable learning. His political notes in the prestigious *Modern Review*, and his erudite analysis of the military situation during the Second World War, when he worked for All India Radio, attracted wide attention, including Churchill's. The autobiography covering the first twenty years of his life, mostly spent in an obscure village in one of the poorest parts of the globe, eastern Bengal, fulfilled higher aspirations. It achieved for him almost instant fame throughout the English-speaking world. A literary style of exceptional power, the sensitive evocation of so idyllic a natural environment, a bold and idiosyncratic interpretation of the Indian past and Britain's role in it and, above all, the projection of a personality remarkable for its intellect, learning and evident lack of concern for everyone else's opinion probably explain that success. A steady stream of publications followed. These include *The Continent of Circe*, which won Chaudhuri the Duff Cooper prize, *A Passage to England*, an elegant biography of Max Müller and (his only book in Bengali) a study of women in Bengali life, which is a major contribution to the social and cultural history of India. Now, on his nineteenth birthday, Chatto and Windus have published a thousand-page volume, a second part of this autobiography, which brings the story down to the fifty-fifth year of his life. A very welcome paperback edition of *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, the first to be published in England, appears with it.

My Hand, Great Anarchy tells the story of Chaudhuri's life as a clerk in the Military Accounts Department, as an unemployed "scholar gypsy" avidly reading and buying books priced way beyond his non-existent means, his years of literary apprenticeship and first recognition, his work as private secretary to Subhas Bose's elder brother Sarat, and finally his work for All India Radio. The volume ends with the publication of the autobiography and its aftermath. A running commentary on the events which changed the face of India and the world during these epoch-making years - and the author's personal responses to national and world politics - are perhaps its most valuable feature.

"Lol thy dread Empire, Chaos is restored: . . . And Universal Darkness buries All": these words from *The Dunce*, which appear on the title-page of the new book in a way sum up the author's perception of the emerging reality. He sees pervasive decline overtaking all that he cherished - Indian nationalism, Bengali culture and the high civilization of the country he admired most, England. There is nothing for anyone's comfort in this massive volume.

Indian nationalism in the Gandhian era, the theme which dominates the entire story, is interpreted as a totally negative phenomenon, divested of all life-enhancing qualities and informed only by a xenophobic hatred of British rule and, in effect, of Britain. Chaudhuri reaffirms in this context the strong faith of his nineteenth-century forebears in the "indispensible gains" which India derived from British domination. To his case the faith is rooted in a particular view of history, a belief in the inherent beneficence of imperialism that has resonances of social Darwinism. The historical process, Chaudhuri argues, is "only a continuation of a biological process", through which new classes and orders of animals emerge, "each manifesting a higher value in life and dominating the earth in succession". Emergence of new civilizations and new values was inseparable from the domination of a particular human group. Thus the British empire in India was one of the "central facts of

universal history". The greatest Indians of the nineteenth century had recognized the antithesis between the natural desire of all Indians to become free and the welfare and progress of the Indian people that British rule had promoted. As early as 1829 Rammohan had wished for its prolongation so that India might not "have many things to lose" when she reclaimed her political independence. Even experiences of personal humiliation did not undermine their balanced perception of historical truth.

By contrast, nationalism in the Gandhian era was inspired only by a hatred shared by the élite and the masses. Chaudhuri recognizes Gandhi as the greatest man of modern India and in every sense a saint in the Hindu tradi-

demand for land reform and the Congress Planning Committee's blueprints for industrialization. Each of these concrete projects reflected a particular ideological stance. It would, however, be an irrelevance to try and pick holes in Chaudhuri's arguments on such grounds, for they really do not detract from the value of his judgments. His suspicion of Indian nationalism is based above all on a deeply negative evaluation of the Indian intelligentsia - their preoccupation with narrow self-interest, excessive concern for personal safety and uninhibited appetite for material gain if chance should happen to bring it their way. He witnessed from close quarters the unashamed display of all these propensities under the Congress régime in the Calcutta corporation, in the Congress-con-

The Times loftily referred to the hopelessness of his cause in 1921, and Archbishop Lang described the Mahatma as a "perverse and dangerous mixture of the mystic, the fanatic, and the anarchist".

Given such attitudes, and the oft-repeated belief in the Indians' unfitness for representative government, duly recorded in the report of the Simon Commission, Chaudhuri finds the parleys between the British and Indian nationalists utterly pointless exercises with no bearing on the political reality. They produced, in his opinion, only a monument to human folly made of paper. He sees no connection between the initiatives recorded in the massive pile of documents and the eventual surrender of authority. At last, he points out, signed the Simon Commission's report without a note of dissent, and his belief in the Indians' unfitness to govern themselves could hardly have suffered a sea-change in the intervening years. Since the crucial decision was based on an all-party consensus, evidently the Conservatives, bitterly opposed to Indian independence, had also agreed. The decision is hence explained by reference to a loss of the will to rule, itself the result of weakness generated by a prolonged war.

The circumstances in which Britain escaped from her Indian empire, and precipitated mass slaughter in the process, are pronounced a matter for shame. Chaudhuri sums it up with a single word, "ratting". He does so despite his deep regard for British civilization and the heroism of the British people during the war. The loss of the Indian empire marked, in his opinion, the end of Britain's greatness and a tragedy for mankind. He attributes primary responsibility for this end result to the leadership of the Conservative Party, effectively in power throughout the greater part of the inter-war years. The very fear of war led to the war which ended Britain's greatness. One wonders in the light of such comments if Chaudhuri really found even the first two decades of Indian independence worse than what the British had to offer in the last years of their rule.

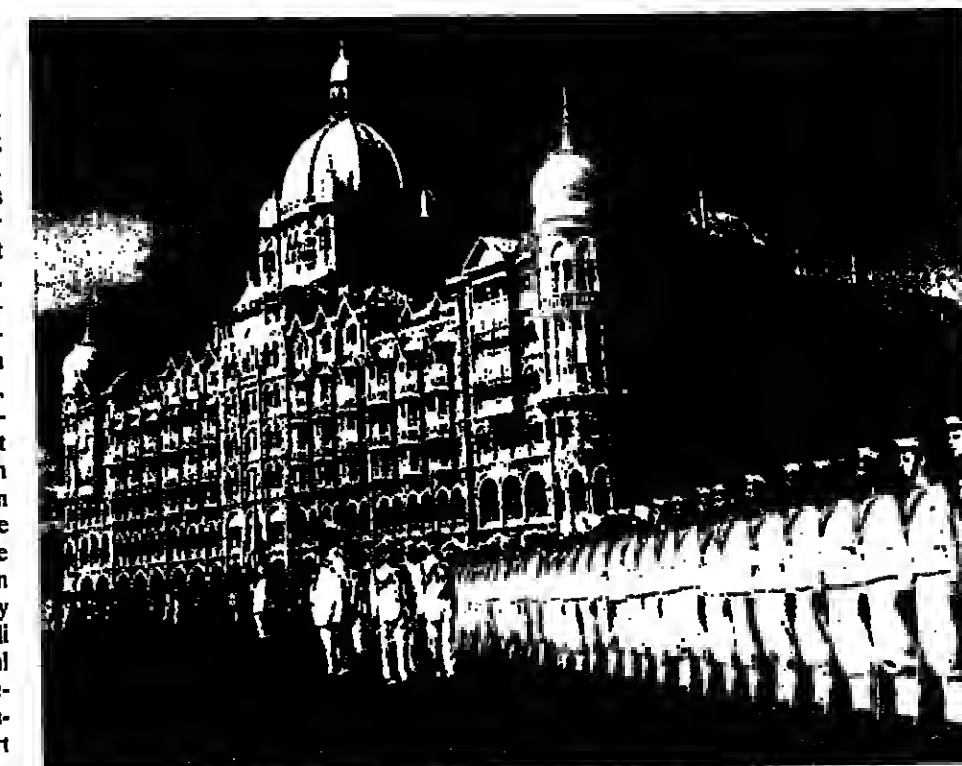
He takes pride in one particular inheritance - nineteenth-century Bengali culture. This he describes as the product of Britain's positive impact on a folk culture at the margin of Indian civilization. He perceives no clash of cultures in that contest - only an eager acceptance of the higher civilization inhibited by the fact of political dependence. The literary and intellectual creativity of Bengal ended like an unfinished symphony, for the quick-witted Bengali trying to live up to the models of two great civilizations, British and ancient Indian, lacked the necessary stamina. The Western impact on Bengali life, however, produced a supreme genius, Tagore, whom Chaudhuri describes as India's greatest poet of all times and one of the world's twenty greatest writers. But the letter fact will never be appreciated, because it is virtually impossible to translate Tagore into any European language and no one will learn the language of a people without a true economic or political power.

The first part of Nirad Chaudhuri's autobiography created an interest in his unusual personality which will be deepened by the second. It is the story of a man's spiritual survival against impossible odds by keeping faith with his values. As an unemployed young man he ordered from Paris a *de luxe* publication costing five times the highest monthly pay he had ever earned. At ninety, he recalls with seasons pleasure the quality of the paper and the printing, a pleasure based on a wealth of technical knowledge. We have here the life-story of a very youthful person of great learning, who is very much in love with life. The fact that he is ninety appears irrelevant to that story and its telling.

The Graduate Faculty

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A military parade outside the Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay, in the 1940s: reproduced from Grand Oriental Hotels: From Calcutta to Tokyo 1800-1939, with text by Martin Mendis, Joseph Fitchett and Anthony Lawrence (263pp., with colour and half-tone illustrations. Dent. £30. 046004734 X). Like many of the hotels in India pictured in the book the Taj's high-Victorian domes and cupolas now present a North British provincial rather than a grandly Eastern air.

tion. The Mahatma's love of power over men's minds is seen to coexist with true renunciation. His theatricality is ascribed to deliberate political purpose: the saint brought politics into religion, not religion into politics. But his religion belonged to the medieval anti-intellectual tradition of simplistic piety. He had no appreciation of the Hindu intellectual tradition or the cultural concerns generated by contact with Europe. His South African experience outraged him and he recognized in British rule in India a similar affront to morality. His political programmes were geared to moral purposes inherent in his religious conviction. His non-violence was a doctrine of Christian derivation, for there are no Hindu antecedents for its application to human affairs. Besides, whatever his personal ideology, the masses followed him only when his agitational programmes offered an outlet for their xenophobia. Hence the wholly negative character of Indian nationalism under Gandhi's leadership. The xenophobia became most vulgarly obvious in Indians' delight over Britain's misfortunes during the war and their overt public sympathy for the Axis Powers, undiminished by any recognition of the evil those Powers embodied. Chaudhuri condemns unequivocally the policies of the Congress during the war and blames the failure of the Cripps Mission on Nehru's intransigence. That ascription, we know from Robin Moore's researches, is not valid.

Chaudhuri makes one exception to his sustained criticism of Indian nationalism. He recognized in the Civil Disobedience movement an urge to do one's duty by one's country and pay the price, without hatred and without expectation, and an opportunity to suffer an ordeal in exultant faith. He does not quite explain why he denies these redeeming features to the Non-cooperation and "Quit India" movements. One could argue against his assessment on other grounds as well. Indian nationalism from the 1920s onwards had no coherent ideology, for it was not a single movement. But it did assume a spectrum of positive programmes, ranging from Gandhi's plans for rural reconstruction to the socialists' plans for rural reconstruction to the socialists' plans for rural reconstruction.

Convictions upheld

Sunil Khilnani

TARIQ ALI
Street Fighting Years: An autobiography of the sixties
280pp. Collins, £12.95.
00021777X

Except in times of revolution, revolutionaries are apt to look a little absurd. In the late 1960s, when it seemed that even the societies of the West were on the verge of radical political change, figures like Tariq Ali held a certain menace for what was then known generically as The Establishment. Young, articulate, possessing charm and the mystique of an authentic Third World revolutionary, leader of a militant student movement, Tariq Ali seemed destined to succeed. Today, exiled from Zia's Pakistan, excluded from the mainstream of British politics not only by Mrs Thatcher but by the Labour Party leadership, he has little room to exercise his talents. He remains, though, typical and representative of a certain kind of 1960s radicalism, which often veered into outlandish positions but which also epitomized the decade at its best.

To be radical in Britain during that period was certainly (and for some perhaps merely) to be chic, but Tariq Ali has had the courage to retain his convictions even into an age when

they look decidedly *démodé*. This political memoir of the 1960s shows, in poignant manner, that he has kept these beliefs not because of faith in some apocalyptic moment yet to arrive, but because of his strong sense of the inequities of existing political arrangements. Not that this derived from personal experience. Born to an eminent Lahore family (his father edited the major national daily newspaper in Pakistan), his childhood and youth were comfortable. He was twenty when he arrived in Britain in 1963. He went up to Oxford that autumn, and in 1965 became President of the Oxford Union. Immediately after graduating he took a job with *Town* magazine, then edited by Julian Critchley and backed by Michael Heseltine. Like so many student radicals, he was a beneficiary rather than a victim of the System.

But where earlier (and subsequent) post-war student generations were content to shun politics, the 1960s generation was different. Towards the end of the decade, students emerged as a distinct and autonomous social group, with their own political interests and forms of protest. The reasons for this were to some extent attributable to the sudden expansion in higher education. More significantly, coming to maturity at the climax of an economic boom and in the post-Cold War climate of "peaceful coexistence", the political sensibility of this generation was deeply affected by the changing

dimension of international politics. The issue which mobilized students was the manifestly unequal struggle between imperialism and the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Tariq Ali himself travelled to Vietnam and was outraged by what he saw (he kept a diary during the journey, and the excerpts included in the present book powerfully record this anger). Returning to Britain, he helped to set up the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and his untiring oratory was instrumental in keeping this issue at the forefront of the student movement.

Int one penalty of maintaining such an internationalist perspective was the lack of any serious analysis of local politics, and a consequent inability to identify or capture a settled constituency. The student movement succeeded in broadening the scope of the traditional Labour movement, but it remained unconnected to, and not very interested in, the mainstream of British working-class politics. Those who experienced the euphoric events of the 1960s watched with bewilderment as the various utopian elements which earlier had been joined together by the Vietnam campaign dispersed and settled in unexpected places. Paradoxically, the student movement ended in the early 1970s, just when sectors of the British working class appeared to enter a new phase of militancy (the "work-in" of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, the miners' strike of 1972).

The transformed economic and political climate of the 1970s and 1980s pushed many who

remained on the radical Left into fiercely sectarian and dogmatic positions. To his credit, Tariq Ali avoided this. Influenced by his reading of Trotsky, Isaac Deutscher and Ernest Mandel, he had joined the International Marxist Group, affiliated to Pierre Frank's Fourth International. But his Trotskyism was more open and eclectic than earlier versions, and willingly incorporated elements of the "counter-culture".

This openness to, and presence of, other voices and opinions is one of the more engaging qualities of this chronicle. *Street Fighting Years* is not an analytically acute or theoretically imposing attempt to assess the significance of the events described in it. Nor does it contain the detail and complexity of good autobiography. It includes personal anecdotes, and documents some of the certainties and doubts of Tariq Ali's political formation (the book is stronger on certainties than on doubts), but there is too often a sense of calculated intimacy. This is unfortunate, for the best moments in the book are the most personal — he can write movingly, as he does about the death of his close friend Clive Goodwin. The book's staccato prose does succeed in conveying a sense of the excitement of the period. Tariq Ali observes that "mocking the sixties became a European pastime in the late seventies and eighties" and the underlying impulse of his own book is a desire to renew our connection with those passionate and imaginative years.

Outrage unforced

Hanif Kureishi

ROBERT CHESHYRE
The Return of a Native Reporter
320pp. Viking, £10.95.
0670817341

Mrs Thatcher is now into her third term in office and it must be the serious job of British writers to evaluate the gains and losses of her long innings. In *The Return of a Native Reporter*, Robert Cheshyre, who returned to Britain in the winter of 1985 after a four-year stint as the *Observer's* correspondent in the United States, has made an impressive attempt to look at the country which he left in 1981 as if it were a foreign land. This ambitious book is particularly affecting and convincing because, although Cheshyre is an unabashed admirer of America — its pluralism, enterprise, and education system — one never feels, as he moves about Britain from North to South, poor to rich, black to white, that he has a preconception about what he is going to find.

So when he goes north to Durham and sees dozens of men scavenging on a freezing beach for coal to hawk round the council estate at £2 a bag, his outrage is graphic and unforced:

If several hundred residents of Brighton were forced to spend twelve hours a day bent double in the surf, gathering what amounts to waste, in order to make enough money to keep their families in decent rather than indecent poverty, the scandal would not be tolerated by either parliament or press.

In Skelmeadsdale, a "new town" built in 1966 outside Liverpool, he makes us feel the reality of unemployment: single women with children living without gas or electricity; heroin and valium addiction rife. These are the people whom Norman Tebbit told to get on their bikes, ignoring the fact that house prices in the South are three times what they are in the North — if a northern house is saleable in the first place.

Not that life in the South is always affluent and easy. Milkmen and police dare not enter the housing estates of North Peckham; old people barricade themselves in their lower flats for fear of attack by uneducated, unemployed youths, themselves brutalized by an environment where to survive you have to lose your humanity. Yet only a mile or two away from these estates, overlooking Tower Bridge, apartments converted from old warehouses are selling for £380,000. Cheshyre writes: "I found I had returned to a society that was flaunting wealth in a way the rich had considered unethical in the post-war years."

This wealth, which could have revolutionized areas of manufacturing industry, has

not — any more than the oil money — been invested either in people or in the making of solid things. And this is the real tragedy of Britain today. It is not only that the contrast between advantaged and disadvantaged is so extreme, or that it is particularly intolerable to be poor or unemployed, but that Thatcherism has so far failed where it should have triumphed: in the stimulation of business and science, and, crucially, in the improvement of education so that vital young people are given a springboard for success. Cheshyre tells us that in the United States if you have an idea, next morning three people will lend you money to get started. In Britain, despite all the talk of the "enterprise culture", banks are reluctant to back new ideas and the Government refuses to provide alternative sources of capital for small businesses.

As for the scientists — poorly paid and blithely told to go to industry for research funding — they, like other academics, are crowding the airports in the flight from Britain. In the spring of 1987, ten professorial chairs in computer science at British universities, including Oxford, were vacant; suitable candidates were not forthcoming.

Cheshyre is so Orwell, and lacks the prose and the ideology really to come to terms with the poor. But he is, mercifully, without grand hypotheses or theorizing: he has simply talked to a great range and number of people and humbly recorded their responses. His book presents a terminal picture of Britain and is a profound indictment of its failure and decline. He tells us little that is new or surprising but has brought together such a well argued and researched catalogue of snobbery and class entitlement, racism and violence, filth and inefficiency, that the effect is deeply shocking. For him: "coming back across the Atlantic was like leaving an invigorating breeze to plunge into a stuffy, smoke-filled back-room". Every Cabinet minister should be forced to read this book.

A Decade of Anarchy 1961-1970: Selections from the monthly journal Anarchy, edited by Colin Ward (287pp. Freedom Press. Paperback, £5.00/\$34.37.9). One of six such compilations issued by the Press to commemorate a century of periodical publishing. Among the pieces reprinted here are "Conversations about Anarchism", the text of Richard Boston's 1968 Radio 3 programme in which he interviewed a number of prominent anarchists, "Poor People" by Alan Sillitoe, "Black Anarchy in New York" by H. W. Morion, "Towards a Libertarian Critique" by Tony Gibson, and "Direct Action and the Urban Environment" by Robert Swann.

Reading a revolution

Tony Thorndike

GORDON K. LEWIS
Grenada: The Jewel despoiled
239pp. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, £17.75.
081834228
BRIAN CROZIER (Editor)
The Grenada Documents
182pp. Sherwood, 35 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB, £9.95.
087071275

When the United States invaded the small island of Grenada in 1983 international law was disregarded. Grenada's sovereignty was violated, even though no US citizens were in danger (despite repeated assertions to the contrary), and there was no American negotiation with the revolutionary military government, which had usurped power on the island prior to what the State Department called the "pre-down violent insertion". But the overwhelming majority of the 90,000 inhabitants seemed to see the American marines as angels descending from the sky to rescue them. Faced with this reality, the Caribbean Left and other supporters of the Grenadian revolution could barely hide their embarrassment.

Although in historical terms the Grenadian revolution (1979-83) was brief, it inspired a great deal of myth on all sides. Gordon K. Lewis presents a sober assessment of the revolution's achievements without disguising his position, which is that of a democratic socialist who does not pretend that "objectivity about

method is confused with neutrality of purpose". *Grenada: The Jewel despoiled* is broad in scope and reflects Professor Lewis's personal anguish at the internal collapse of the ruling New Jewel Movement, the killing of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and some sixty others and the subsequent era of "crocology McCarthyism" — the persecution and victimization of those who associated themselves with the revolution's aims and achievements. In a region where political thought has traditionally been dependent on imported values and ideas, the New Jewel Movement stood out as a force for national identity and pride. Its demise rendered the reassertion of traditional deference to the United States all the more poignant.

Lewis has had time to reflect on Grenada's revolutionary experience and has been able to draw heavily on the many government and other documents taken from Grenada by the CIA. He exploits these in order to prove convincingly that Bernard Coard, Bishop's deputy, together with the young ultra-left zealots with whom he surrounded himself, bear ultimate responsibility for the violent deaths and the end of the People's Revolutionary Government. Although Lewis makes clear that "person and ideology do not exist separately from each other", a close understanding of these involved is critical. Lewis believes that Coard the technocrat began to conspire against Bishop in order to take the New Jewel further to the left as early as 1982. Although, like the more popular Bishop, he was aware of the danger of losing support for the revolution and that socialist policies, particularly those derived from the preferred Cuban model, would have to be introduced with care, after Bishop

refused to share this leadership, Coard had him placed under house arrest.

Not surprisingly, on October 19, 1983, part of the largest crowd ever assembled in Grenada rescued their hero and, together with those of his supporters in the Cabinet not imprisoned elsewhere, Bishop was taken triumphantly to the old slave fortress overlooking the Portofino-like harbour of the capital, St George's. But the army, on Coard's orders, attacked the crowd, and eventually Bishop and his close colleagues were executed by firing squad.

Lewis's emphasis on conspiracy — first by Coard, and then by the United States — inevitably leads to some distortion. The Marxist-Leninist study group around Coard, the Organization for Research, Education and Liberation (OREL) — incorrectly named the Organization for Educational Advance and Research — appears in his book to have been all-forecasting, but this essentially sixth-form debating society had, by 1980, to all intents and purposes, ceased to exist; it was only useful to Coard's opponents after his capture. Lewis hints that the crisis was CIA-inspired; he believes that the Grenadian traitor was Ian St Bernard — the only one of the original twenty Coard sympathizers accused of Bishop's murder who was freed after a Preliminary Inquiry in 1984. But, in fact, there is no evidence whatsoever to support such a charge. Lewis also suggests that serious military intelligence mistakes, suffered by the United States forces, were in fact deliberate propaganda and that documents captured in Grenada by the CIA were altered or even forged.

Lewis's view is that US policy in Grenada was dictated by a belief in "Manifest Destiny". This has resulted in a "popular social imperialism in American life" in which power breeds arrogance and where moral bankruptcy has "replaced the work ethic with the play ethic, honesty with subversion". Although the democratic spirit in America remains potent, "liberals are the victims of the intellectual backwardness of American life" and they hardly ques-

tioned Reagan's use of force in Grenada. Lewis also seems less than fair when, on the whole, he avoids commenting on the "revolutionary manners" imposed on Grenadians by the New Jewel regime: "manners" such as the banning of opposition parties, the introduction of censorship and preventive detention.

The Movement did achieve many positive social and economic changes, particularly in adult education, agriculture, health and rural water supply, and many of these were lost following the entry of the Americans and the reassertion of the Grenadian elite's dependency upon imported, and especially American, values. It had, however, a tiny, elitist and unrepresentative membership; it was secretive and sectarian, and the Stalinist Central Committee demanded "iron discipline", "absolute obedience" and the uncritical acceptance of an alien political system imported from the Soviet Union.

There is no such sophisticated critique in *The Grenada Documents*, edited by Brian Crozier. The author's highly selective use of the captured documents is reinforced by the tone of Sir Alfred Sherman's introduction. Together, they present a picture of Grenada as a communist dictatorship closely controlled by the Soviet Union, in which the International Department of the Soviet Communist Party assigned specific tasks to the New Jewel Movement. *The Grenada Documents* is perhaps the most dogmatically anti-left book on Grenada that has appeared since the demise of the revolution, and it seems pointless to attempt to counteract its distortions by citing evidence of the Grenadian zealots' frustration when the Soviet Union was reluctant to accept them as "trustworthy" communists and so underwrite the tottering economy. Many documents exist, among those captured in Grenada, which illustrate the sharp commercial practice, verging on exploitation, displayed by the Soviet Union and East Germany. It is clear that it is not only America that does not want a "second Cuba" on its doorstep; neither does the Soviet Union.

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Waiting for democracy

David Nicholls

JAMES FERGUSON
Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvalliers
171pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £14.95.
0631156041

A short while ago the reputed "strongman" of the present governing junta in Haiti, Colonel Williams Régala, visited Washington, and was told emphatically that free elections must go ahead in November. Any attempts by the military to intervene in the democratic process would result in an end to all forms of American aid. Fearing that the colonel would pay little attention to the words of civilians, a few brass hats from the Pentagon were called in to reinforce the point.

The "democratic process" for Haiti — as for many other countries in the Caribbean — has meant in the past the election rather than the imposition by direct military action of the next dictator. Haitians who are old enough will look back to 1957, when François Duvalier was elected president after a similarly extended campaign. Will there be a new Duvalier? Will one of the, innocent-looking, modest, apparently benevolent candidates assume the sinister mantle of Baron Samedi? Although there were irregularities in the 1957 election, there can be little doubt that — of the candidates who finally presented themselves — Duvalier was preferred by the majority. It is a conclusion many Haitians find hard to acknowledge. He was also viewed as acceptable by the United States as well as by its aid mission. Will a dictator emerge again from these elections? James Ferguson's *Papa Doc, Baby Doc*, while following a pattern established by a number of recent interpreters of Haiti's past, is a lively and accurate account of the rise and fall of the Duvalliers. Though directed to a wide readership, it avoids the sensationalism which for many years characterized popular writings on this much-maligned country. After a brief historical survey, Ferguson considers in more detail the principal features of Duvalierism. He correctly establishes the popular backing for Papa Doc among the black middle classes in the capital and the provincial towns, though he does not, I think, sufficiently emphasize how Baby Doc's loss of this support set the stage for his eventual collapse. He chronicles the principal events of the Duvalier régime and shows how groups which Papa Doc had effectively eliminated from the political scene — Church,

business community, intellectuals, trade unions, army — gradually returned during Jean Claude's years in office.

Twice Ferguson writes of François Duvalier "parading": at the invasion of 1958 (when a group of exiles seized the barracks) and in the crisis with the Dominican Republic of 1963 (when President Juan Bosch was preparing to invade from the east). But whether Duvalier's behaviour during these events can be interpreted as panic is doubtful. His reaction to both situations can be plausibly explained as calculated moves to discredit his opponents.

Perhaps the most important feature of the protests which led to the departure of Baby Doc in February 1986 was that they were instigated in the countryside and the provincial towns. The US occupation of Haiti (1915-34), during which the peasants were alarmed for the first time since 1791, had put an end to a nineteenth-century tradition of rural guerrilla activity. Subsequently power was centralized in the capital, where, until the 1980s, significant movements have been based. It is too much to hope for the election of a president who really acts in the interests of the masses, for in Haiti rhetoric about the peasants as the true foundation of the country is the stuff of campaign speeches and soon forgotten by the victor. It may, however, be the case that rural groups have become well enough established over recent months to resist the impositions of the government and to defend the interests of the masses against a predatory State. When Haitians say "Après bondié c'est l'état" (after God comes the State) they refer not to the benevolence, but to the power and unpredictability of God: acts of the State in Haiti tend, like "acts of God", to be arbitrary and generally destructive.

Discussing the policies of the ruling junta, Ferguson rightly concludes that — apart from a degree of civil liberty and cosmetic gestures against some former *tonton macoute* — no major changes have been made since the Duvalier régime ended, and that the revolution remains "unfinished". He also emphasizes the important role played by the Church in the present crisis as well as the continued significance of Vodou. Though stronger as an account of events than as an analysis of underlying causes and tendencies, *Papa Doc, Baby Doc* — well written and intelligently presented — provides a useful background to the current situation in Haiti and to the "democratic process" which Colonel Régala and his military colleagues view with such unease.

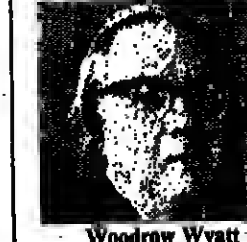
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Caring how in caring for

David Collard

AMARTYASEN
On Ethics and Economics
131pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £14.95.
0161 559199

Over the years Amartya Sen has raised, and often answered, a series of fundamental questions about welfare economics. Now, in this slim book of his Royce lectures, he attempts a sort of intellectual brokerage between welfare economics and ethics.

Since Adam Smith, mainstream economists have scraped away at the ethical component of their subject until there seems to be very little of it left. Indeed they have found it convenient to ignore Smith's other great work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Prudence, in that book, means reason and understanding plus self-command (not self-love). The subsequent narrowing-down of Smith was, argues Sen, a major cause of the impoverishment of economic theory. I agree with Sen about this, but quoting passages from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is not sufficient to resolve the Smith Problem. There remains a striking suspicion that Smith felt he had satisfactorily proved what came to be the mainstream position: that because of the Invisible Hand it was sufficient in market transactions to assume rational, self-interested behaviour. If this were so, it would be quite right to ignore ethics while doing economics. And, in fact, the results of ploughing on for a century or two in this manner have sometimes been impressive – a point which Sen well recognizes. One result was the elegant Fundamental Theorem of Welfare Economics, which has the remarkable double property that every competitive equilibrium is an Optimum and any Optimum can be achieved via a competitive equilibrium. In other words competition is a Good Thing. Notice that the ethical input to the theorem stops well short of old-fashioned Utilitarianism.

Terms like "Optimum" and "Good Thing" suggest that significant ethical assumptions are hidden away here somewhere. One of these is that judgments about income distribution are "subjective" and should be kept separate. Sen's own contributions to this area of theory have been substantial. He recognizes the subjective nature of statements about distribution, of course (this was one of the points of his *On Economic Inequality* of 1973). But his later writings have emphasized that the convenient split between distributional statements (subjective) and efficiency statements (objective) cannot really be sustained. This is rather a pity: it would have been nice to have had the ethical component in economics neatly segregated inside a separate compound, where Rawls and Nozick could have grazed peacefully, doing little harm to anyone else.

The other ethical assumption behind the Fundamental Theorem concerns the nature of the Optimum itself. It is a very special optimum, requiring very limited ethical assumptions. The Optimum is simply a state in which no further mutually beneficial "trades" may be made. If such "trades" are available they will be made under competition; if not, "improvement" is possible only if one party gains at the expense of others. To decide about that we have to go to Ethics. But for the rest all we need is for people to be rational and self-interested. They choose what they want and we allow their preferences to count. Sen has previously referred to this approach as Welfarism, and regards its ethical base as a miserably limited one. A major theme of these lectures is the need to establish a much richer base.

Consider rationality. The doctrine of "revealed preference" says that people choose what they prefer, given what is available. It would be irrational for them to do otherwise. On this doctrine it would hardly be possible to be other than rational, and rationality is thus a kind of consistency. Sen is not keen on this tautological interpretation: "rational choice must demand something at least about the correspondence between what one tries to achieve and how one goes about it". But this discussion of rationality which, in the end, turns so much on definitions, is less interesting than his discussion of self-interest.

There are at least two things wrong with the dominance of the assumption of self-interest in economics. First, it leaves out whole ranges of human behaviour for which it provides only a weak explanation: giving to charity, voting against one's direct interests, devoting oneself to a good cause, helping those struck by disaster, etc. Admittedly it is possible, just, to force most of these forms of altruism into the Procrustean bed of self-interest, but the exercise is unduly cramping. I here emphasize the "altruistic" nature of departures from self-interest, though Sen includes examples of customary and conventional behaviour as well.

This leads immediately to the second major disadvantage of self-love, that it might not be conducive to the efficient attainment of one's goals. Departures from self-love may instead be instrumental in achieving what we want. Take the case of environmental pollution. It is easy to see that too much pollution will result if competing firms are left to their own devices; the Fundamental Theorem then breaks down and a referee (the State?) has to step in. But many situations in between may be modelled as games in which co-operation is actually superior to competition. Departures from self-interest may then prove efficient.

So we see that economics could profit (as it were) by releasing Ethics from its compound. The result would be a plural economic framework in which people's preferences and the justifications for choice were partial, a distressing prospect for those who like their in-

dications to be simple. But if simple indicators have to be qualified in various ways, then the value of simplicity is not so clear. For example, comparisons of various countries' well-being based upon the simple indicator of GDP per capita would need to be buttressed by other indicators – of life expectancy, literacy, etc. The outcome of such pluralism would be an unhelpful but still rigorous welfare economics.

The other object of Sen's missionary work is to persuade philosophers that economics can be of use to them. This will generally be the case, he argues, for consequentialist statements, though not for absolute statements, for example about liberty or about honesty. Economics will be able to help (in the consequentialist case) because of what Sen calls its "engineering" role. As an example he cites general equilibrium theory and the analysis of famine, to which he himself has made great contributions. Or, to take a related example, we might start from the Greatest Happiness principle, where it is good to feed the hungry. At this point the economist may be called in, not to prevent the hungry being fed, but to analyse the consequences of such feeding for indigenous agricultural incomes, national growth, etc. In his engineering role the economist is quite useful to humbling interdependent systems, sometimes with long chains of causation. Sen is clearly right here, though his point is to some degree the well-known one that to be ethical in our economic behaviour one needs to know some economics. But the point is not

unique to economics, for just as ethical economic behaviour requires knowledge of economics, ethical medical behaviour requires a knowledge of medicine, and so on. Consequentialist statements about action in the world require a knowledge of the world.

Economics by itself, however, is very often unable to deliver clear consequentialist answers. Suppose I am in favour of economic sanctions against South Africa. I am not sure that my view is an entirely consequentialist one, but to the extent that it is, economics is of only limited help. I need to know the consequences of my action for trade patterns, incomes per head and their distribution, the dynamics of the political and class structure in South Africa, etc. The answers to these questions are uncertain but clearly they require more than a knowledge of economics. In a sense this brings us full circle to Smith. Not only was the ethical basis of his analysis a rich one but he treated economics as part of a unified social science, together with moral philosophy. It is ironic that if modern economics is to be of any help in answering Big Questions, then the discarded bits have somehow to be reintegrated with it.

Slim though it is, this volume finishes with thirty-two pages of references, justified if they lead philosophers to seek out the economic references and vice versa. A measure of its success will be the intellectual work it stimulates across the now fuzzy boundary between the two disciplines.

Advising and developing

Christopher Johnson

DONALD MACDOUGALL
Don and Macdougall: Memoirs of an economist
276pp. Murray, £14.95.
07195 44216

Economists have a poor reputation these days, for making wrong forecasts and advocating impracticable policies. Keynesian economists in government during the twenty years after the war, such as Sir Donald Macdougall and Sir Alec Cairncross, have been the butt of monetarist politicians, who now listen to another generation of knights, Sir Alan Walters and Sir Terence Burns. Yet the record of the Keynesians stands up well by comparison with that of their successors, and in *Don and Macdougall* Macdougall describes his half-century of plim jobs in and out of (but mostly in) government with pride and without apologies.

He emerges from these chatty memoirs as a precocious, painstaking, persistent Balliol Scot with the ability to spot problems, handle people, and get things done. His intermittent academic career gave him a solid basis for assignments as a national, and sometimes international, civil servant. His *magnum opus* was *The World Dollar Problem* (1957); ironically, the problem turned out to be too many dollars rather than too few, as he ruefully acknowledges. The other work for which he will be remembered, the 1977 "Macdougall Report" on European fiscal federalism, commissioned by the EEC, ended only in being ahead of rather than behind the times.

Now that Macdougall is able to take us behind the scenes we can see that his claim to fame is in the realm of deeds even more than in that of words. He had a good war as head of statistics for "Prof." Lindemann, Churchill's right-hand man, and went on important missions to the United States and, in 1945, to Germany. He was to rejoin the "Prof." in government in the early 1950s, and details how he and others then managed to abort the misnamed ROBOT plan to free the pound. In between times, his lively feet took him away from Oxford for a year in 1948-49 to become the first Economics Director of the Organization for European Economic Co-operation in Paris.

Macdougall's finest years were in Whitehall from 1962 to 1973, when, for all the sterling crisis, Great Britain's economic growth rate was faster than either before or since. In those days it did not matter whether you served a Labour or Conservative government, since the two parties' economic policies had converged to a

non. Macdougall was the first Economic Director of the new National Economic Development Council ("Neddy") created in 1962 by the Tories to plan for faster growth, and happily carried on by Labour. The enthusiasm with which they tried to raise the growth rate from 3 to 4 per cent a year brings to mind Nigel Lawson, the current Chancellor of the Exchequer, forecasting the selfsame growth rate for 1987. After a quarter of a century, the wheel has come full circle.

Macdougall was a key figure in the ill-fated Labour experiment of the new Department of Economic Affairs, set up in 1964. He describes vividly both the miseries and the splendours of working for George Brown, whom he converted to his own belief in devaluation – a policy as well suited in his view to the circumstances of 1964 as it had been ill suited to those of 1952. It is revealing to find how often ministers and officials kept returning to the idea, which Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan first tried to suppress, then tardily implemented.

The summit of Macdougall's career was his period as Chief Economic Adviser to the Treasury from 1969-73, first to Roy Jenkins, then to Tony Barber and thus, in effect, to Ted Heath. He retired in October 1973, not a bad time to close a chapter of Keynesian economics; like so many economic advisers, he has the defence that his advice was not taken. There was too much reflation by too many channels during his last five years in power.

Thereafter, until 1984, Macdougall had a new lease of life as Chief Economic Adviser to the Confederation of British Industry. Leading industrialists are out, unfortunately, very interesting to read about except possibly for those who know them. Yet the last three chapters of the book are valuable for the picture they give of the top men in the CBI and the TUC working together in the 1970s to achieve a Labour government's objective of pay restraint. After 1979, the mould of this cosy corporatism was broken; the CBI now finds it difficult to get on close terms with either the TUC or its own Conservative government. How much better off are we without such a tripartite understanding? The CBI, having lost its share of the empire, has not yet found a new role.

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Eloquent but elusive

Stephen P. Stich

GERALD E. MYERS
William James: His life and thought
628pp. Yale University Press, £30.
0300 034172
GRAHAM BIRD
William James: The arguments of the philosophers
221pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £15.95.
07100 9602X

There are few figures in the history of American thought as important as William James, or as intriguing. Since his death in 1910, there has been a steady stream of scholarship analysing his work, his character and the complex interrelations between them. Gerald E. Myers's monumental examination of James's life and thought is a major contribution to this literature, and destined to become the definitive treatment for decades.

The man portrayed in this exhaustive, and occasionally exhausting, study is a complex, subtle, often elusive thinker who saw philosophical issues in novel and unexpected ways. He had an extraordinary gift for expressing his vision in engaging prose punctuated by vivid examples and anecdotes. One striking measure of the appeal of his ideas is the size of the audiences he attracted. In 1906 and 1907, his public lectures on pragmatism in New York and Boston often drew a thousand or more listeners. But James's eloquence was at best a mixed blessing. For, as Myers makes plain, he was often prepared to sacrifice clarity and careful exposition for an arresting image or a memorable turn of phrase. Though he often protested that his critics misunderstood him, his penchant for pithy slogans must bear much of the blame. In the long run, it has been the slogans, the images and the short snatches of argument that have survived and influenced other thinkers. James's "Radical Empiricism", the systematic metaphysical theory on which he laboured during the last decade of his life, was neither novel enough nor clear enough to attract many adherents. He envisaged Radical Empiricism opening a new path in philosophy, providing a middle way between Materialism and Idealism. But, as Myers demonstrates in considerable detail, it is hard to see that James's metaphysical system is all that different from Berkeley's.

To James's work many have found the first distinctly American voice in philosophy – practical, bold, optimistic and iconoclastic. He was a scientist by training, and like most of what is best in American philosophy after James, his philosophical theorizing was always scientifically informed. But, as Myers emphasizes, he was also a man of intense, often dark emotions. During his lifelong battle with depression and despair, he quite self-consciously used philosophical theorizing as a weapon to keep his internal demons at bay. There are deep emotional needs behind much of James's writing, needs which he often made no attempt to conceal. Indeed, a central tenet in his thinking was that philosophies are essentially the expressions of their creator's temperament, and that the arguments used by philosophers are largely rationalizations of conclusions already sanctioned by their personalities. The vivid personality reflected in James's philosophical writings is part of what gives his work its enduring interest.

Another endlessly engaging feature of his character and work was his restless, egalitarian and sometimes quirky curiosity. Experience was the central element in James's philosophical system. In everyday experience he claimed to find objective space and time, along with the glue that held the self together. And in religious experience he thought he could find clues to the mysteries of the cosmos. The religious experience by which he set the most store was not the experience of the cerebral neo-Hegelians and transcendental idealists who dominated Western academia at the turn of the century. Rather, as Joseph Royce tells us, for James "the unconventional and the individual in religious experience are the means whereby the truth of a superhuman world may become more manifest". Thus, in preparing *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James "went plumbing" in order to get first-hand accounts of religious experience from mystics, monks,

eccentrics, and inspired but lowly people". His Harvard colleague Santayana might look down his nose at the "communitarian, hysterical, spiritualistic or medicinal" sects that sprouted so prolifically in American soil, and "were despised by select and superior people". But for James, the members of these sects could offer valued accounts of experiences, to be studied and pondered with an open mind. This same curiosity about the unconventional led to a long involvement with psychics and psychic research, and to a spirited defence of faith-healers, Christian Scientists and "mind-curists" when a proposed medical licence bill in Massachusetts threatened to put them out of business.

If James was an engaging and unconventional thinker, he was also multi-faceted, and full of energy – hard to predict and even harder to pin down. One of the great virtues of Myers's long and meandering account is that it makes no effort to package James into tidy categories, or to paper over his many complexities and contradictions. There is no artificial systematization here, no argument that there is a deep psychological or philosophical unity underlying the sometimes bewildering diversity of James's thought. Myers's portrait is rich, complex and loose-jointed enough to make it seem less than mind-boggling that James could be claimed as an important influence by both Ludwig Wittgenstein and Benito Mussolini. Here I give just a few examples of the complexities and contrasts which Myers carefully records.

By most accounts, James was a great teacher who made a lasting impact on students as different as Theodore Roosevelt, Gertrude Stein, Walter Lippmann and W. E. B. Du Bois. Yet he did not enjoy teaching, and said, "I sometimes shudder at the thought of the bad instruction I have given".

During the middle years of his career, much of his time was devoted to research and writing in psychology. He founded the first experimental psychology laboratory in the world, and is still widely regarded as one of the great figures in the history of psychology. Yet he found experimental psychology tedious, had serious reservations about the value of what experiments revealed, and was greatly relieved when Münsterberg succeeded him as director of the psychology laboratory at Harvard. Moreover, during the almost two decades that James ran the laboratory he made not a single noteworthy discovery and, with the debatable exception of the James-Lange theory of emotions, he contributed nothing of significance to psychological theory.

In ethics, James defended a cautious respect for the principles of conventional morality, which he saw as the most recent result of the human race's long history of moral experimentation. Yet he also endorsed moral ideas that he himself described as revolutionary, like the rejection of retributive justice by Tolstoy and Bellamy. In politics, the man who said "the presumption in cases of conflict must always be in favor of the conventional" recognized that there was an unmistakable maverick. An anti-visionist and anti-militarist, he opposed the Spanish-American War and was clearly out of step with the political spirit of his time.

In philosophy, James was an outspoken opponent of over-intellectualized abstractions that had no clear bearing on experience. He anticipated the logical positivists with his declaration that "there can be no difference that does not make a difference". If a pair of philosophical propositions seem to contradict each other, and yet "by supposing the truth of one you can foresee no conceivable practical consequence to anybody at any time or place, which is different from what you would foresee if you supposed the truth of the other", then, James insisted, the difference between the two doctrines is "only specious and verbal". It was in this no-nonsense spirit that James made his famous "Damn the Absolute!" remark to Royce. Yet the same hard-nosed pragmatist who urged that we should determine the "cash value" of ideas flirted seriously with panpsychism, and with the mystical notion that there is a mother-sea of consciousness of which we are all part.

For all his eminence, influence and popular appeal, most of James's views found remarkably few advocates among the ranks of professional philosophers. The single exception was his pragmatism, which became the rallying cry

of a major philosophical movement with adherents in Britain, Italy and Germany as well as in many places in the United States. Characteristically, however, there was widespread confusion about just what Jamesian pragmatism did and did not maintain. Indeed, Myers claims with considerable plausibility that "in no philosophical movement have the defenders and critics been more confused about each other's meaning than in American pragmatism in the first decade of the twentieth century". James became increasingly frustrated as fellow Pragmatists, including Peirce, publicly distanced themselves from the movement, while an opponent like the neo-Hegelian Bradley began to wonder whether he himself had not "always... been a pragmatist". But, as Myers makes clear, James had no one to blame but himself, since under the label of "pragmatism" he had bundled a variety of ideas that had, at best, only a rough family resemblance to one another.

One of these ideas is, in effect, a sketch of a theory about the significance (or "content") of a thought. According to James, a thought's significance is determined by its "practical consequences", that is, by the "sensations we are to expect from it" and the "reactions we must prepare". When put in this way, the doctrine sounds rather like the verificationist theory of meaning advocated by the logical positivists a half-century later. This account suggests that true thoughts are the ones that we could verify if we tried, and this notion is certainly present in James's writings: "True ideas are those we can assimilate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot."

But there is another doctrine, on the face of it very different from these, that James also portrayed as central to pragmatism. This second doctrine dealt with those situations, often of desperate emotional urgency for James, in which we must choose what to believe from among philosophical and religious propositions which cannot be verified or falsified by experiment or observation. In such situations, James urged a "subjective pragmatism" in which we explore the consequences of believing each alternative, and select the alternative whose consequences are best. Here, of course, the consequences in question are not observational, but emotional; they include the hope, the solace or the anguish that various beliefs may engender. Moreover, James seems to say that in choosing the belief with the best consequences we are believing what is true. Indeed, as Myers argues, James sometimes convinced himself that there is no important difference between accepting propositions whose consequences have been verified and accepting propositions whose consequences would be best for our long-term personal and emotional well-being. It was, I suspect, a case of being blinded by his own eloquence. Flouting that he could craft smooth formulas which applied both to the doctrine that verified beliefs are true and to the doctrine that beliefs leading to better lives are true, he lost sight of the differences between them. How, you might wonder, could any formula fit two such different notions? Here are a pair of examples quoted by Myers:

Any idea that helps us to deal, whether practically or intellectually, with either the reality or its belonging, that doesn't entangle our progress in frustrations, that fits, in fact, and adapts our life to the reality's mere setting, will agree [with reality] sufficiently to meet the requirement. It will hold true of that reality.

Let me now say only this, that truth is one species of good, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct from good, and co-ordinate with it. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief. . . . Surely you must admit this, that if there were no good for life in true ideas. . . then the current notion that truth is divine and precious, and its pursuit a duty; could never have grown up or become a dogma. . . . "What would be better for us to believe?" "That sounds very like a definition of truth. It comes very near to saying 'what we ought to believe' and in that definition none of you would find any oddity. Ought we ever not to believe what is better for us to believe? And can we then keep the notion of what is better for us, and what is true for us, permanently apart? Pragmatism says no, and I fully agree with her."

These rhetorically elegant, philosophically elusive passages capture the spirit of James's philosophical writing, a spirit that is very much present in the pages of Myers's book. Myers's

criticism, like James's, is graceful and courteous. His explications are leisurely, loosely structured, occasionally repetitious and rarely crystal clear. It is, one suspects, the sort of hook that James himself would have liked enormously.

Graham Bird has written a very different sort of book, designed for a different audience. It offers expositions of James's central philosophical views, comparing and contrasting them to those of more contemporary thinkers, including Russell, Wittgenstein, Austin, Quine, Grice, Davidson, Parfit and others. Much of the exposition is solid and helpful, particularly when references to recent thinkers are kept to a minimum. When discussion of contemporary writers is centre stage, the book is much less satisfying. Their views are too complex to do them justice – much less criticize them – in the few pages available.

The James in Bird's portrait is a more consistent and systematic thinker, and a much less colourful man, than the James conjured by Myers. In part, no doubt, this is a consequence of the limited range of topics Bird discusses. But I suspect that Bird was looking for a consistent philosopher, while Myers was prepared to take what he found. It is, however, unfair to compare the two volumes, since they differ so drastically in scope and aspirations – not to mention sheer bulk. Bird's book is a useful one for the philosophically sophisticated reader who wants an overview of James's philosophy.

William James's influence on the development of religious thought is considered in Wayne Proudfoot's *Religious Experience* (1985), which has recently been reissued in paperback (263pp. University of California Press, \$8.95, 0 520 06128 4). Focusing on different topics in the analysis of religious experience, Proudfoot pays special attention to James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (though widely read, "its significance for contemporary issues in the philosophy of religion has often been overlooked"), and to Schleiermacher's *On Religion*.

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S. J. TESTER
A History of Western Astrology
250pp. Woburnbridge: Boydell. £19.95.
0851154468

PATRICK CURRY (Editor)
Astrology, Science and Society: Historical essays
302pp. Woburnbridge: Boydell. £35.
085115459X

Until its unforeseen occultation at the end of the seventeenth century, astrology had been for many centuries a perfectly respectable intellectual activity. Even those thinkers who felt it necessary, for one reason or another, to attack astrology as an art never questioned its validity as a science. It has been, therefore, an extremely important facet of the history of our civilization; and yet, fearing the stamp of lunacy perhaps, enlightened historians have shown a marked tendency to ignore its influence. But now, fortunately, this state of affairs seems to be coming to an end. Following earlier efforts to establish the historical importance of astrology by Otto Neugebauer, Lynn Thorndike, Eugenio Garin, Keith Thomas and others, we now have the first general survey of the topic in *A History of Western Astrology* by S. J. Tester.

Dr Tester examines the fortunes of scientific or mathematical astrology from its origins in ancient Greek culture, through its eclipse in the Dark Ages, its ascendancy in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, to its waning in the early Modern period. Sadly, the author died shortly after completing his manuscript, but it is evident that he was one of those scholars who could carry his immense learning lightly. The book is a delight to read and an excellent guide through so complex and wide-ranging a subject.

Inevitably, though, there are a number of lacunae. Tester's focus on "learned" astrology results in a study which is almost entirely concerned with the theoretical astrological text-book. There is virtually no discussion of astrology as a practice, as a skilled craft; we do not learn what astrologers actually did. There is no account of the role of the astrologer at court, much less of the humbler astrologer's role in the lives of ordinary people. The very real changes in astrological practice and its cultural impact brought about by the printing press's ability to produce cheap almanacs goes more or less unremarked.

There are even some shortcomings in the author's account of high theory. He gives no really satisfactory description of the different notions of astrological causality. All modern commentators on these matters have tended to see celestial influence in terms of the physical effect of rays or some other form of emanation. This neglects the fact that astrologers do not talk about the continuous influence of any given body, but rather concentrate on those times when it is in a particular geometrical relationship with another heavenly body. The influence of Mars may play no role whatsoever in a horoscope simply because it is neither in a significant part of the sky nor at a particular angular separation from another planet. If Mars and Saturn are at 90° to one another, their joint influence is expected; if they are at 80° or 90° apart, they may both be ignored. This kind of cause - depending simply on the formal arrangement or organization of things - was known to thinkers in Antiquity and the Middle Ages as a "formal cause", and was categorically distinct from the "efficient causation" which modern scholars seem unable to get out of their heads. There can be little doubt that the concept of formal cause justified far earlier thinkers the otherwise inexplicable view that the entirely abstract system of mathematics could be used to understand the

Bound for Mars

Desmond King-Hele

THOMAS R. McDONOUGH
Space: The next twenty-five years
237pp. Chichester: Wiley. £14.25.
0471856711

This book is a passionate plea for a strong programme of space exploration, from a white-hot proponent for American space. Like most gossellers, Thomas R. McDonough does not always face up to inconvenient facts. Space exploration on the grand scale is very expensive, and he never discusses whether the world's leading debtor nation (or any other) can afford it. Instead he asserts that "space is a place to make money". This dubious dictum is propped up by a picture of an imaginary asteroid "where vast resources may be found": what fools we are, he seems to say, not to go and grab this gleaming gold. Reality is not so simple. Another uncomfortable fact for him is that in the 1980s there have been six times as many space launches by the Soviet Union as by the United States. Ignored facts do not alter beliefs, and McDonough is happy in his belief that the United States is the leader.

If you can adjust your mind to discount these two misperceptions, you will find *Space: The next twenty-five years* easy, buoyant and easy to read. McDonough sets out a sensible plan of action for the future exploration of space, on the unspoken assumption that a prosperous United States will choose to launch a fair fraction of its wealth that way. He has his eye on far horizons, and our poor dull Earth detains him for only six pages, as compared with seventeen pages for Star Wars and more than 100 for extra-terrestrial endeavours. Once not in space, he moves with assurance, looking first at the plans for a US space station in orbit round the Earth in the mid-1990s. (To be fair, he also says the Russians have two there already, but gives one the wrong name.)

The next step on into space is a satellite base on the Moon, rather like those in *Armageddon*, now followed by lunar landings. With no atmosphere and weak gravity, the Moon has the value of being an

excellent launch site for interplanetary craft, especially if mining for oxygen and metals proves feasible. McDonough also commends the far side of the Moon as ideal for astronomical observatories. He likes the idea of jumping six times higher on the Moon, but fails to mention the humbler corollary that many people disabled and chairbound on Earth may be able to walk on the Moon.

His next goal is more distant: "the red star with the magical name of Mars beckons to us irresistibly, filled with mystery and promise". This high-flown sentiment is a signal that McDonough is very keen to go to Mars and to colonize it, creating a new world there, with hopes as high as in the American New World in the seventeenth century. Once Mars is colonized, "even the destruction of Earth would not obliterate humanity": he seems to see the Martian colonists as people free of evil, like an imaginary Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna. In reality, it could well be that the more aggressive humans would export themselves to Mars and be more at risk.

From Mars, McDonough whisks us away on a tour of the other planets, the asteroids and comets, and then takes a quick look at the more distant universe, the possible techniques for getting there, and the prospects of detecting extra-terrestrial intelligence.

Enthusiasm for space travel is a force to be reckoned with, especially by dissenters who like savouring the beauties of nature on Earth better than the idea of being cooped up in a space-ship. Space fever seems to arise from deep desires to escape the woes and trammels of Earth and to see into the mysteries of the universe. Long ago, before rockets were thought of, these desires fuelled religious fervour and diverted wealth into building cathedrals and churches, launching towers to heaven.

Thomas McDonough's book is certainly go-ahead and over-optimistic, but there is nothing impossible in his scenario of space stations in Earth orbit, followed by colonization of the Moon and further flights by robot spacecraft to the outer planets. This may well happen, and be followed closely by his *millennium* dream of settlement on Mars.



A detail from Hieronymus Bosch's "The Juggler" is reproduced from Medieval Pageant by Bryan Holme (194pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.95. 030014213).

workings of the physical world. Nowadays we simply take this use of mathematics for granted, and the concept of formal causation has become virtually meaningless. If we wish to comprehend the origins of mathematical physics, however, we must try to recover its precise meaning, and the history of astrology will prove to be an important part of the story.

Some elements of Tester's superb general account are taken further in the excellent collection of essays edited by Patrick Curry, *Astrology, Science and Society*. The standard of scholarship here is equally high, if not so lightly borne as Tester's, so that the result, although rewarding, is often a rather harder read. Furthermore, the focus once again is almost entirely on the exposition of élite, learned astrology, so that we are more informed about astrology and science than about astrology and society. Of the twelve essays only two are directly concerned with the social role of the astrologer, though three more do have something to say on the matter. Predictably, perhaps, two of these are in opposition. Hilary Carey's study of astrologers at the English court in the later Middle Ages argues very persuasively that they had no real political influence, tending rather to utter what their superiors wanted to hear. Richard Lemay, on the other hand, insists, *en passant*, that we cannot fail to notice "the leading role played by astrologers in determining policies throughout the medieval period".

Not even the appearance of these two major studies manages to solve the problem of the sudden adumbration of astrology as a legitimate scholarly pursuit. Earlier claims that the Copernican theory sounded its knell are no longer taken seriously and Keith Thomas's more recent suggestion that notions of celestial influence became untenable as a result of Newton's work is convincingly dismissed by

Simon Schaffer's essay, in *Astrology, Science and Society*, on Newton's view of comets. Far from removing the ominous signature of comets, Newton's world system "re-established them", as Maupertuis wrote in 1742, "in all the reputation of terror where once they were". Even Michael Hunter's discussion of a newly discovered attack on astrology by John Flamsteed before he became Astronomer Royal (published here for the first time as a valuable appendix to Hunter's essay) comes to the conclusion that the new science was ambivalent towards astrology and, anyway, was simply not influential enough to overcome its still powerful appeal.

Tester was too expert to think that developments in astronomy could have had anything to do with astrology's decline, but he did not entirely escape from the assumption that science must have had something to do with it. At the conclusion of his *History*, he suggests that the old alliance between medicine and astrology began to fall apart by the end of the seventeenth century. By then, Tester explains, "it was clear that medicine was improved and improving, with greatly increased and constantly increasing understanding of the working of the human body and of the material causes which act on it", while astrology remained as vague and uncertain as ever. But this is surely to beg the question. Even today, many of us know to our cost that the art of medicine is vague and uncertain; in spite of its scientific image, it is often little more than conjecture. Certainly, the dramatic improvement which Tester discerns in seventeenth-century medicine is a figment of medical mythology. What we really need to know is how physicians managed to persuade the public that medicine was "scientific" at a time when it was almost entirely guesswork, and why astrologers were unable to do the same.

John Dryden and His World

James Anderson Winn

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COMMENTARY

Out of the darkness

Roger Kimball

Francisco de Zurbarán
Metropolitan Museum, New York, until
December 13

Every now and then - it seems ever rarer these days - there is an exhibition of an important artist at a major museum, in which the works exhibited are intelligently chosen and sensitively installed; the catalogue is informative and scholarly, eschewing indiscriminate superlatives and trendy interpretative gambits; the reviewers are enthusiastic but largely avoid cant; and the relatively modest crowds attracted to the exhibition seem to have come not from a sense of social obligation but because they are interested in the art.

The magnificent exhibition of seventy-one paintings by the great Spanish Baroque artist Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664) is just such a rarity. Organized by Jeannine Batiste, curator emerita in the department of paintings at the Louvre, it provides a stunning synopsis of Zurbarán's career from his early monastic paintings of the late 1620s and 30s, to the devotional images he painted for individual

clients and on speculation from the 1640s to the early 1660s. It is the first major exhibition of Zurbarán's painting in the United States and the first overview of his work to be shown anywhere since 1964. (After the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the exhibition then travels to the Louvre, where it may be seen from January 11 to April 11.) It is accompanied by Jeannine Batiste's scrupulously researched catalogue, which contains accomplished essays on various aspects of Zurbarán's life, work, and cultural context by Jonathan Brown, Yves Bottineau, and Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, as well as a chronological review of the artist's career by Mlle Batiste.

Together with his contemporary (and acquaintance) Diego Velázquez, Zurbarán is widely regarded as among the greatest painters of the Golden Age of Spanish painting. Born in Fuente de Cantos, a small town some seventy miles north of Seville, Zurbarán began his career in Llerma in 1617 after a three-year apprenticeship in Seville. None of his work from this period of obscurity and miscellaneous commissions survives. The turning-point came in 1626, when he won a commission to paint twenty-one pictures for the Dominican monastery of San Pablo el Real. This was a

Seeking the true Laetitia

R. V. Holdsworth.

BEN JONSON
The New Inn
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

The *New Inn* was hissed at its single performance in 1629. Jonson's reaction was violent, even far from him: he killed out the printed play with a title-page which accused the King's Men of incompetence and their Blackfriars audience of stupidity, a Horatian epigram which announced "I prefer to trust myself to a reader than bear the disdain of a scornful spectator", a dedication "To the Reader" demanding to know whether he could spell, copious notes on the action and characters, two self-vindicating epilogues, and an ode in which the author exhorts himself to "leave the loathed stage". These counterblasts were ill judged, and not only because they accompany a play which proclaims the wise man's superior indifference to detractors. As John Caird's enjoyable *Swan production* - the first since 1903 - demonstrates, *The New Inn* can be made to act much better than it reads.

Certainly a first reading inclines you towards the Blackfriars verdict. The plot, which continues to seem at once thin and impenetrable, concerns Goodstock, the host of the Light Heart in Baint, and his melancholy guest Lovel, in love with Lady Frances Frampl (from *frampold*, "peevish"), but sometimes simply "high-spirited"). Visiting the inn with her male admirers for a day of "society and mirth", Lady Frampl appoints her chambermaid Pru Queen of a Court of Love, and disguises the host's son Frank as a female attendant, naming him Laetitia in memory of a long-lost sister. Lovel is obliged to perform "two hours' service" to Lady Frampl, expounding the nature first of love then of valour, receiving a kiss from her at the end of each hour. Lord Beaufort, Lovel's ward, carries off Frank and marries him, whereupon Frank's nurse, a one-eyed, alcoholic Irish char-lady, reveals that he is in fact a girl, and indeed "the true Laetitia". Lady Frampl's sister, and that she herself is the girl's mother and not one-eyed at all. Goodstock caps this by revealing that he is the long-lost Lord Frampl, their father and her husband. He pairs off Lady Frampl with Lovel, and Pru with one of Lovel's friends.

Harford and Simpson, Jonson's editors, saw in all this "the more rotten debris of Jonson's genius", raked together to underpin the fat for "stilted love games in vogue in the Caroline court". Jonsonian elements are certainly present: the double re-seeing of Frank is a benign elaboration of the central joke in *The Silent Woman*, and Goodstock and Lovel are typical portraits of the conflicting sides of Jonson's personality (the former's motto is "Be merry

and drink sherry"), while the latter likes dissecting flies). There is, besides, the usual parade of freakish humours mounted by the inn's denizens, including the Hispanified foppies of Sir Glorious Tiptoe and the exotic sexual proclivities of the tailor Stuff and his wife, who receive such standard Jonsonian tonics as being beaten, blaaetted and stripped.

But the play also registers a quite different influence: the comedies of Shakespeare. If the *Light Heart* is another of Jonson's "centres attractive" like Lovewit's house or Volpone's bedchamber, it resembles, too, those heightened, alternative worlds which extend through Shakespearean comedy from the Ephesus of *The Comedy of Errors* to Prospero's island, where people are restored to one another and to themselves. Jonson, who wrote a poem explaining "Why I Write Not of Love" and whose vision of life was expressed by his impressa of a broken circle, here creates a setting where love is celebrated as "circular, eternal", and where characters have a Shakespearean openness to change. One can even spot specific debts. "All the world's a play", muses Goodstock, recalling *Jogues*; and Lady Frampl, "wild with self-love" and in danger of being left "penitent and solitary", looks back to Malvolio, "sick of self-love" and fasting in his dungeon.

Given Jonson's traditional comic and satiric strengths, one would have predicted that on the stage the main action, with its high-minded philosophizing, emotional exchanges and dizzying last-minute discoveries, would appear dull and silly, while the grotesques injected the energy and life. At the Swan the opposite proves the case. John Carlisle's Lovel, black-suited and grim, journeys movingly from misanthropy to marriage, and his disquisitions on love and valour are spellbinding. A tall hourglass runs out as he speaks, focusing the play's insistent, Shakespearean concern with Time as both destroyer and healer. Fiona Shaw's Lady Frampl, in passionate red, is the other dominant role. Engagingly fidgety rather than peevish, she leaves it poignantly unclear until the last moment whether she has really fallen for "Lovel" or whether she is, punning aside, just "a good actor", as her friends suspect.

The production rightly leaves the audience in the dark about all the hidden relationships and Frank's true gender (a deception in which the programme co-operates), relying on a strong vein of theatrical self-consciousness, signalled by Goodstock and Lovel taking turns to sit in the front row, to carry off the final revelations. Only the humorous case-studies jesting about the sharp practices of stable grooms, they remain aimless refugees from the court. Jonsonian elements are certainly present: the double re-seeing of Frank is a benign elaboration of the central joke in *The Silent Woman*, and Goodstock and Lovel are typical portraits of the conflicting sides of Jonson's personality (the former's motto is "Be merry

great coup for the young artist, obtained partly because he agreed to do the series of paintings at a reduced price. It turned out to have been a shrewd bargain. In 1629, on the strength of his early monastic work, he was honoured by an invitation to return to live and work in Seville, then a prospering centre of monastic patronage. By the mid-1630s his workshop had become, in Jonathan Brown's words, "a factory for devotional images".

Zurbarán enjoyed enormous success for more than a decade. But by the 1640s popular taste began to turn away from the demands of his severe and often somewhat static figures in favour of the warmer, busier canvases of painters like Murillo and Francisco de Herrera the Younger. The exhibition shows that Zurbarán attempted, with sharply varying degrees of success, to adapt his style to changing fashions. But the gradual eclipse of his popularity proved irreversible. The upheaval in Seville's economic and political fortunes in the 1640s exacerbated his decline. With ever fewer domestic commissions available, Zurbarán began looking to the colonies for a market for his work. He increasingly found himself executing pictures on speculation, entrusting them to a ship's captain to sell abroad. As Batiste shows in her biographical sketch, the legend of Zurbarán's ending his life in utter poverty and obscurity has been exaggerated, though there is no doubt that by 1664 he had fallen far from his former affluence and position at the centre of fashionable taste.

The present exhibition opens with the great "Christ on the Cross" (1627) from the Art Institute of Chicago. Originally in the monastery of San Pablo el Real, the painting is a masterpiece of Christian devotional imagery. The figure of Christ, eyes closed and head lolling gently to the right, emerges from absolute darkness, dappled with a supernatural light. There are no distractions here: the world has fallen away in the presence of this single, absorbing image of excruciating beauty. The influence of Caravaggio's tenebrism is patent, though Zurbarán's severe figure displays none of the coy lasciviousness or stagy foreshortenings that were Caravaggio's stock in trade. As with many of Zurbarán's early works, the shallow space and tightly organized, geometrical simplicity of the painting show the influence of the painted wood sculpture of Juan Martínez Montañés (a marvellous example of which from the Met's collection is on view in the exhibition).

With its taut, meditative atmosphere, "Christ on the Cross" epitomizes what Profes-

sor Brown describes as the "uncanny realism and majestic abstraction" of Zurbarán's painting. It also reveals the artist's ability to subsume a scene of extreme agony into an invitation for the most refined pious rumination. This indeed was one of his greatest achievements. Many of his best paintings speak of a world of pain transfigured and transcended. The famous "Saint Serapion" (1628), for example, has a seductive, dreamlike quality completely at odds with its morbid subject. Despite the ropes that bind the martyr's hands, there is something exquisitely tranquil about the painting. Only someone already familiar with the story of the martyr's gruesome death would guess the horrors that the lovingly painted scapular conceals. Zurbarán's several pictures of female martyrs exhibit an even greater urbanity and detachment. Though frankly depicted, the martyrs' attributes - the plucked eyes, the wrenched teeth, the severed breasts - seem only to reinforce the air of studied calm. In the case of his pointing of "Saint Margaret of Antioch" (c1635), the calmness borders on insouciance, as the pert saint in her red skirt, dark blue jacket, and jauntily cocked hat challenges the viewer, defiantly oblivious of the dragon parading behind her.

The exhibition contains at least a dozen indisputable masterpieces. Some, like "Saint Francis Standing with a Skull" (after 1634) or "Veil of Saint Veronica" (1635-40), are sombrely contemplative; others, like the extraordinary "Saint Hugh in the Refectory" (1645-55) or "Saint Peter Nolascio's Vision of the Crucified Saint Peter" (1629), transform traditional narrative painting with an almost surrealistic handling of space and subject-matter. Of course, not all of Zurbarán's paintings achieve this exalted level of achievement. In general, one can discern a slackening of concentration in his work after the mid-1640s. The hints of surrealism that embolden some paintings seriously mar others, like "Virgin of the Immaculate Conception" (1640-50), which is a supremely competent, and supremely uninspired, rote production. The capricious and unappealing logic that determines artistic reputation has not been entirely kind to Zurbarán. After a brief moment of glory in his own time, he has largely receded into the background of art history, respected by connoisseurs but little known and, hence, little loved. It is to be hoped that this brilliant exhibition will help restore him to his rightful place as a religious painter of rare depth and feeling and a craftsman nearly equal to Velázquez.

Italian ensembles

Jonathan Keates

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI
The Barber of Seville
Coliseum

The gradual reappraisal of early nineteenth-century Italian opera in the light of scholarly research, professional recordings and staged performances has brought Rossini to the fore as one of the great shaping spirits of musical drama. In language of a fierce, unmistakable individuality he proposed styles and structures which effectively recreated opera: Verdi and Wagner are inconceivable without him. All the more remarkable, therefore, was *The Barber of Seville*, an essay in the generally outmoded opera buffa manner. The hostile reception at its première in 1816 at Rome's Teatro Argentina owed something to the public's sense that the management, unable to afford a serious work, was palming it off with a comedy on a theme already familiar in Paisiello's version, whose success had made it almost sacrosanct.

What ultimately guaranteed immortality to Rossini's *Barber* was the beauty of its texture and form, and this structural elegance is underlined in its latest appearance at the Coliseum. Mark Elder's conducting, emphasises the breadth, even the grandeur of Rossini's conception in the ensembles, the spurt glass of vocal lines and an irresistible attractiveness of orchestral colouring.

So very Italianate a reading of an intensely Italian work is matched in Jonathan Miller's

production. Tiresome attempts at Iberian local colour (Rossini's sistrum and guitar are mere tokens) and the traditional sash and mantilla for Figaro and Rosina are set aside, and the pair are located in the Naples and Venice where they belong. Funchinelloa from Giandomenico Tiepolo accompany the Count's serenade, Bartolo steps straight out of Longhi and the action in the doctor's house takes place within an eighteenth-century box set.

Much of the evening's gusto derives from Della Jones's powerful Rosina, stealing the musical honours with her stylistic accomplishments and bending others to her will by a combination of ruthlessness and animal passion. Patrick Power's fussy little Almaviva, at his affecting best in the second act trio, is clearly dooned by this particular set of iron dimples. Rodney Mcnann copes gamely enough with Bartolo but lacks the vocal authority the role requires for his absurdities to be adequately realized. He is easily overshadowed by John Connell's Basilio, a malign hippopotamus whose "Calunnia" is charged with finally shodded manna. As Figaro Alan Oplo, aparkish and theatrically versatile, needs to establish a more powerful counterbalance to his overwhelming female partner in mischief.

Perfection of an ensemble underscores the aptness of a new translation by Amanda and Anthony Holden. Although far too leisurely in its manipulation of stage business and situation, especially in the Act One finale, the production, in Tanya McCallin's handsome sets, offers the most satisfying *Barber* in London for decades.

Imagining Australia

Murray Bail

Australia began its existence as a fabled continent. For more than a thousand years the very best armchair-travellers in the Northern Hemisphere reasoned, or rather, imagined Australia into existence, expanding and contracting it, stilling it about in the longitude and latitude of their minds, giving it hopeful names - never has a country been given so many names - and fabulous inhabitants, until the first European finally stepped ashore in 1606. To the Greeks something big must have been down there to balance the land-mass of the Northern Hemisphere; a "counter-earth" fitted their misused notions of symmetry. A Pythagorean, or even the master himself, described the earth as "half-shaped" and "inhabited round about", and declared that "there are also Antipodes, and our dwellers then up". Plato has Timaeus imagine such a place beyond Atlantis. Aristotle seems to be more specific. A temperate tract must certainly be in the Southern Hemisphere to correspond with the northern, and that was the line taken by the Stoics. Eratosthenes in the third century BC accepted Antipodes, though he wasn't sure it could be "lit up". Plutarch and others followed.

Not to believe in a *Terra Australis* became positively unGreek. And if there was a South Land it followed it was inhabited, for Nature does nothing in vain. The mathematician Hipparchus described the inhabitants as Antichthones, though the small problem of the heat of the intervening Torrid Zone made them, according to the Roman Geographers, Meti and Phlyi - inaccessible. Only Lucrinius seems to have found the whole idea ludicrous. He couldn't imagine the Antipodes walking about head downwards without tumbling into the lower sky. And that "when they see the sun we behold the stars at night". But Lucrinius was only a poet. By the second century AD a South-

ent Continent was given timier though invisible shape by the speculations of geographers, astronomers and brooding astrologers, notably Cicero and Strabo. Ptolemy joined it on to Africa and Asia.

So it remained, somewhere down there below, Mareo Polo alluded to its existence after reaching the East Indies in the thirteenth century. And as more and more mariners were blown off course, and more land below the Equator became known, *Terra Australis* was progressively pushed down to join the Antarctic, where in a printed map of 1483 it looks like a huge lump of elongated Tasmania, and as a sure indication of the uncertainty its name had become longer: *Temperata Antipodum Nobis Incongnita*. As late as 1570 in a popular world-map by Ortelius, the South Land, now called *Terra Australis nonchum quanta*, is still glued to the ice-cap, and has acquired an immense, sword-girdling breadth to balance the northern land-mass.

Between these two fictions, an intriguing inscription had appeared around 1523 on the terrestrial globe of a Dutch geographer, Johannes Schöner: "The southern continent recently discovered but not yet fully known." And twenty years later in one of the "Dieppe" manuscript maps of Jean Rotz the mind-exhausting shoreline of northern Australia - here called "Java the Great" - makes its appearance in the correct position and in surprising detail. It is not all coincidence that the golden age of French and Dutch cartography coincided with the first evidence of European contact with the fabled Continent.

But was *Terra Australis* *non terra firma*? Had "Australia" finally been discovered?

When it first appeared on a map, in 1605, the name "Australia" was assigned to one of the islands of the New Hebrides. And some eighty years after the explicit Rotz map, on June 29, 1628, we find Peter Paul Rubens, very much a man of the world, discovering Australia. Re-

fine leaving for Madrid to negotiate a truce between England and Spain (where he met Velázquez who would 300 years later darken an entire saloon of Australian painting) Rubens wrote to a friend: "I have heard on good authority, but in secret and great confidence, the positive report that [the Dutch] have discovered *ultra Tropicum versus Austrum*, a great country, not to say, new world." The diplomat then went overboard. "This will be a memorable thing in our time."

These excited whisperings were like the incomplete lines on the map: scratching the surface. Another 150 years would pass before the South Land became fact, and even then it would remain a source of endless fiction.

It was perhaps strange, or proof of the difficulty to see beyond what was firm underfoot, that once these marvellous armchair-travellers in the Northern Hemisphere agreed on a Southern Continent, and that it was inhabited, they were unable then to leapfrog back, as it were, and people it with figures more or less as ordinary as themselves. In the face of darkness land was land, but the invisible Antipodes were imagined as outlandish freaks. The reassuring "artist's impression" of pine-trees, castles and half-naked men with bows and arrows in one sixteenth-century map of what is now Arnhem Land suggests only that Gombriich's law of environmental transference can be applied to the visual imagination. The uncharted space of the Southern Hemisphere and the stubborn suggestion of something big down there beckoned writers to embark on imaginary voyages; and the reader could be expected to encounter the strangest animals, vegetables and minerals.

In the list reference to "Australia" in fiction Apuleius in his novel *The Golden Ass* (before AD 197) writes of Aotichthones, who are accessible at least to witches. To the influential medieval theologian St Isidore of Seville it was

Continued on page 1330

In brief

The intriguing question of how the Soviet media would treat the award of the Nobel Prize to the émigré Joseph Brodsky (the awards to both Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn were denounced) was answered last week. A statement from the news agency Tass introduced the subject obliquely by announcing that a selection of poems by Brodsky was scheduled for publication in the literary journal *Novyi Mir*. "This publication has nothing to do with the prize given to the poet by the Swedish Academy", declared Tass baldly. The magazine's poetry editor, Oleg Chukhontsev, was allowed to be more gracious. "When we sent his poems to be typeset, our only aim was to represent all the significant aspects of poetry today. It is impossible to imagine modern poetry without Joseph Brodsky." During a meeting in New York, Brodsky apparently told Chukhontsev that his award would encourage interest in Russian poetry in the West.

It is the first time since the 1920s that the work of a living émigré has been published in the Soviet Union (although the announcement avoided actually stating that Brodsky has lived abroad these last fifteen years). But the latest affirmation of openness has already run into trouble: contrary to Tass's claim that agreement had been reached on the selection of poems to be published, Brodsky is in fact unhappy with it, and wants it changed.

The first ever National Theatre production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* opened at the Lyttelton on November 25 (it will be reviewed in next week's *TLS*) using a revised text based on the author's own Schiller Theatre production and the 1984 production by the San Quentin Drama Workshop. Textual emendations have, in fact, been a feature of *Godot* productions ever since the play was first performed in London in 1955. The Lord Chamberlain's blue pencil was then still suspended like the Sword of Damocles over the commercial theatre and to avoid it the play was put on at the Arts Theatre, which, since it was a private club, was beyond his jurisdiction. Its success there encouraged a transfer to the Criterion in Piccadilly Circus. This let the Lord Chamberlain loose and, sure enough, he insisted on cuts. Most of them were typical: the substitution of "belched" for "farted", and of "backside" for "arse", the deletion of "erection", "pubis" and "piss". Trivial and silly though they seem today, these mutilations were as nothing compared with his later behaviour over *Endgame*, which was banned on the grounds that it was blasphemous.

To its later shame, Faber and Faber decided to publish the bowdlerized and not the original version. Charles Montelb, formerly chairman of Faber, explains. "The reasons for this were purely commercial. In the mid-1950s the orthodox publishing view was that to publish the text of plays was quixotic folly. The only possible market for them, it was thought, consisted of amateur dramatic societies. For a general firm such as Faber to publish them at all was foolish enough but to publish a text which could not be performed without the danger of a police raid was midsummer madness. Moreover, the official climate at that time was aggressively hostile to anything that might be judged obscene and there had been an outbreak of prosecutions. Caution should be the watchword; or so at least it was argued; successfully, inside Faber and Faber."

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Beckett, of course, was displeased and insisted - rightly, says Montelb - that all copies should contain a note at the beginning making it clear that the text was a mutilated one, but apart from that he was forbearing and forgiving. "I fully appreciate," he wrote to Montelb in 1957 when he had completed *All That Fall*, "the difficult position you were in last year with the publication of *Godot* - n'en parlez plus. Perhaps some day you may print the complete version." They did, of course, and next year will publish the revised version, along with facsimiles of Beckett's own directorial notes.

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Letters

'Life: A User's Manual'

Sir, - Saan David Bellos will be revealing that I once borrowed a fiver from him and never gave it back. But I'm afraid none of these diversionary tactics will get rid of the evidence as I presented it in my last letter (November 13-19): his English version of Georges Perec's *La Vie mode d'emploi* is badly translated and badly edited. I can assure both him and his editors that I would much rather have praised the book than condemned it, for obvious reasons.

Bellos now acknowledges that I have found "three of the book's many mistakes", which he says he is in the process of putting right. By this he presumably means "Maggiora" for "Maggiore", the table on the table, and "flaunt" for "flout". I would have thought that any translator and editor who let those three into print deserved to have applied to them the epithet "careless". But Bellos does not seem able to understand that it is not a question of correcting an error here or there, but of the whole texture of the book in English. A single absurdity, like "the artist flaunting all verisimilitude", or a single clumsiness, like "Boubaker would give her terrible rows", would hardly have caught my attention in a five-hundred page book, and then only to evoke the passing thought that even Homer nods.

I suppose it all has to do with the notion of trust, and the example Bellos spends so many column-inches discussing is a case in point. "Transverse obsolete medieval and oriental weapons" never struck me in *Ulysses*, though now I look at it, it seems hard to know what Joyce could have meant by it. Bellos no doubt has a point when he says he merely transcribed what Joyce had written, though one wonders whether Perec left out the offending word because it wasn't in the French translation or because he didn't feel it meant anything. I am sure there are a number of other cases where what I noted as blunders or infelicities are also the result of Bellos's decision to use existing texts, and he may have been right to do so, though it has given rise to problems. But when from page 1 to page 500 one is constantly being battered by phrases which seem to make little sense and certainly not to be the kind of English anyone would speak or write, even the most innocent phrase starts to look suspect. However, since Bellos is presumably not going to do anything about "three shoe-boxes full of alpine cards", "woken in a start" and "usually, kitting out a space for living always ends up being a sometimes sticky compromise", because he cannot see anything wrong with them, nothing I say will make him grasp the nature of my criticism.

GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI
60 Prince Edward Road, Lewes, Sussex.

The Baader-Meinhof Group

Sir, - The Baader-Meinhof Group, Gang, or Complex? As the translator of Stefan Aust's book, may I point out that contrary to Nicolas Walter's claim in his letter to you (November 6-12), your reviewer was perfectly correct in saying that Heri Aust prefers the term "group". *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex* was indeed the original German title of the book; by "complex", however, the author means not the tarantula themselves, but the entire chain of events and ideas leading up to, and spreading out from, their terrorist activities. That was the significance of the word as applied to the subject of their investigations by the West German authorities, and there is also one brief reference to its ambiguity, precisely the same ambiguity as may exist in English when it is used in a psychological context. But the actual people involved are consistently referred to in the body of the German text as the "group".

As to the question of Red Army Faction or Faction: as Mr. Walter says, "most English discussion of the subject" employs the former term, and, like him, I initially wondered why one should help feeling that the actual similarity of two wholly unrelated words must have had something to do with it in the first place. I therefore began translating *Fraktion* as "Faction", only to become less and less convinced, as I proceeded, that "Faction" was an adequate rendering of a word whose primary Ger-

man meaning is of a political grouping, particularly a parliamentary party. (The usual senses of English "faction" are rendered into German by *Bruchteil*.) I suppose it is possible that students of left-wing ideologies, even if they have no German, would instantly recognize the political sense of "Faction" in English, but Aust's book is not solely for them; it is for the interested general reader, so that the expedient of an explanatory footnote on the first appearance of a phrase which was to recur again and again in the following pages did not strike me as appropriate either. Linguistically annoying as it may be, it therefore seemed that for the general reader the phrase "Red Army Faction", as commonly used in English, was preferable. Translators do take the trouble to think these matters out, as the letter from David Bellos printed on the same page as Walter's amply proves.

Finally, Nicolas Walter is quite right in indicating that Jillian Becker's debt is to Aust, rather than vice versa; she handsomely acknowledges his help in the foreword to her *Hitler's Children*. That book, incidentally, ended with the death of Ulrike Meinhof in the middle of the Stammheim trial; the rest of the story can now be found in Stefan Aust's book.

ANTHEA BELL
Holme Cottage, 9 Saffron Road, Histon, Cambridgeshire.

A History of Transylvania

Sir, - Ion Ratiu complains (Letters, November 6-12) that the three-volume *Erdélyi Történet* (History of Transylvania), published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, is the history of the subject "as the Hungarians see it". What else could it be? The question is whether the authors make some effort to present an impartial account. That effort is there for all to see - alas, in Hungarian. Mr. Ratiu implies that the book omits to mention Romanian opposition to Transylvania's union with Hungary in 1867. Would he please look up Volume Three, pages 1503-06, where a very detailed account is given of Romanian and Saxon opposition to the union? Mistakes of this kind make it all the more important to have this indispensable book in English.

L. PETER
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'The House Next Door to Africa'

Sir, - I know that it is not usual for a father to write about a review of a book by his son, but it does seem that a grave injustice has been done to the text, in the account by Anthony Sattin of Denis Hirson's novel *The House Next Door to Africa* (November 13-19). I read, with amazement, that according to the review, the young narrator visited his father, "a prisoner of the State for little more - it seems - than having an enthusiasm for all sorts of books". Part of the tragedy of South Africa lies in the fact that people have been imprisoned for the possession of books, but that was not what Denis said. On page 75 he paints a picture of Johannesburg pylons, and like the poet he is, speaks of "a dusk country that these pylons covar with their shivering steel song, a strip of infertility, a cold frontier". This led to a contrasting image: "My father, according to evidence in court, was among those who blew a few of them up, in the thick of night one keels over slowly before me, flame spewing from under it, dust blinking with sparks. The other pylons stop dead in their tracks, mute and unknowing."

It is quite remarkable that, in a review that shows such sensitivity to what was written, Mr. Sattin should have missed so crucial a passage. Yet, by virtue of what is said, the text is trivialized. The characters and events in this book, as the dust-cover states, "are drawn from the author's own family", and I can assure your reviewer that the author's father was indeed in prison for over nine years; for participation in an organization that was accused of destroying pylons. Denis was twelve years old at the time (as he states in the text).

and these were the perceptions of an adolescent. He uses poetic licence in suggesting that I participated directly in him wiping up these structures - but he most certainly did not say that a prison sentence was meted out because of "enthusiasm" for books.

Furthermore, there is nothing in the text to suggest that the family saw exile as "the solution to the dilemma faced by whites opposed to apartheid". We chose to come to Britain because I was placed under house arrest, was banned, and, among the many restrictions imposed on me, I could no longer teach in South Africa. Whether we should have stayed under these circumstances is debatable. At the time, we decided that there would be more stability for the family if we left South Africa. We joined thousands of our fellow countrymen, black and white, middle-class and working-class, abroad - and must stay in exile until the régime is changed.

BARUCH HIRSON
13 Talbot Avenue, London N2.

'Tomorrow was War'

Sir, - Sally Laird is right to wonder about the origins of the hearty applause for Boris Vassiliev's *Tomorrow was War* (Commentary, November 6-12), which on the final evening of its brief London tour also played to an otherwise unenthusiastic and unfilled house. In the interval, however, while some of the audience left, some Soviet visitors were briefed by the house management not to miss the final applause, and indeed when the time came this hitherto quiet audience found a second wind. Enthusiasts in the stalls got to their feet in a way rarely seen in London, even at the opera, flowers cascaded from the wings on the self-applauding cast, and some of its female members began to weep with emotion. Finally, Vanessa Redgrave appeared on stage, where she read out a letter from Mrs Gorbachev on the Soviet privilege of presenting a play to such a spiritually cultured people as the English on the eve of the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution. It now appeared it was the Revolution which had so excited us.

The Lyttelton Theatre went to no little trouble to make the Soviet company welcome, but to allow the stage to be used for extraneous political purposes was irritating and ill judged. In fact, the apotheosis of overdone friendship came right at the beginning of the evening, with the foyer announcements in Russian. Am I wrong in thinking we didn't get a parallel opportunity early this year to test our German, Swedish and Japanese outside the auditorium? My sympathies to any of the Russian actors who felt alienated by the man-from-Mars treatment, also to the bewildered wit in the audience who, as he left, wondered aloud what Denis would write in his next letter to the Taganka.

LESLEY CHAMBERLAIN
2 Daybrook Road, London SW2.

'Women in Love'

Sir, - In a review of Lawrence's *Women in Love*, Lyndall Gordon states (October 16-22) that the "discredited prologue" for that novel has been known since 1968.

Actually, it had been known five years earlier, having been published in the Spring 1963 issue of *Texas Quarterly*, together with an introduction contributed by me after my lucky discovery of the manuscript in the University of Texas Library.

GEORGE H. FORD
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Rochester, New York 14627.

Pineal Position

Sir, - Reading my piece on the *Révue des Sciences Humaines* (October 9-15), I was startled to see that Bataille's "migratory eye" had been allowed to wander from a pineal to a penile (sic) position. May I therefore clarify? Neither penile nor penial, but pineal - the location of the so-called third eye and, in the opinion of Descartes, the interface of soul and body.

HOWARD DAVIES
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London NW5.

Spy Fiction

Sir, - In defending his review of *The Spy Story* (Letters, October 23-29), John Sutcliffe cites my essay on John Buchan. The quotation is inaccurate and the impression it gives misleading. I write: "If the Jews [in Buchan's novels], unlike the Negroes, were not in all ways inferior, they were most certainly different, and as one of Buchan's American heroes said of one of his Jewish heroes (vulgar Americans could be relied on to voice what polite Englishmen only thought), he simply 'didn't like his race'."

The italicized words, omitted by Sutcliffe, bear out the point of the preceding paragraph of my essay: that Buchan's novels feature Jewish heroes as well as Jewish villains. I go on to say that Buchan himself abandoned the casual antisemitism of the clubman as soon as Hitlerism appeared on the scene - "when social impediments became fatal disabilities" and "when the conspiracies of the English adventure tale became the realities of German politics".

None of this, as I also said, absolves Buchan's novels (not Buchan himself, as Sutcliffe's misquotation has it) of antisemitism. But the historical context is important, as is the distinction between two quite different modes of antisemitism.

GERTRUDE HIMMELFAR
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York, New York 10036.

Captain FitzRoy

Sir, - It may seem exultant to criticize Neil Curry's interesting poem "Galapagos" (November 13-19) for factual inaccuracy. But poetic licence is not an excuse for calumny. Poetic licence may have been a creationist, but he was not searching the South American coast for evidence to support Genesis. He was a surveyor of genius, and was doing a top-class survey job for the British Admiralty. Any doubling back was to check his findings when they disagreed with existing records. He was always proved right. *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, Volume One, edited by Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith, puts FitzRoy's outstanding ability as a surveyor beyond dispute.

FABIENNE SMITH
55 Manor Place, Edinburgh.

Jane Austen

Sir, - In his review of Park Honan's biography of Jane Austen (November 6-12) David Nokes quotes a comment on Highbury: "we might imagine here the rick-burnings and riots that lay just ahead for rural villages". It could well be wisdom after the event that tempts such a reading of *Emma*, but it is nevertheless an interesting fact, not noticed by Jane Austen scholars, that when the "Captain Swing" riots began in Kent in August 1830, and the first of the machine-breakers were brought to trial, it was Sir Edward Knatchbull (1781-1849) who was the presiding magistrate. *The Times* of October 25, 1830, reported that he discharged the rioters with a caution and a three-days' prison sentence, in the hope that "the kindness and moderation evinced this day by the magistrates would be met by a corresponding feeling among the people". It was this same Sir Edward who married Jane Austen's favourite niece Fanny Knight, thus endangering, in her aunt's eyes, her "delicious play of mind".

BERNARD RICHARDS
Brinsford College, Oxford.

Sir, - Jane Austen's nephew and first biographer is normally referred to as "James Edward Austen-Leigh", not "James Austen-Leigh", as in your brief note of Austen-Leigh's *Memoir of Jane Austen* (6-12 November, p.1216). Furthermore, it is not true to say that the *Memoir* has been out of print since 1926; it was printed in 1965 with the Penguin English Library edition of *Persuasion* (E369) in my *A Bibliography of Jane Austen* (1982) and has to the best of my knowledge been permanently available in that form for the last twenty-two years.

DAVID GILSON
51 Blenheim Drive, Oxford.

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Their island story

Alan Sykes

In the 100 years between the Centennial and the Bicentennial anniversaries of British settlement in Australia, Australian history has not behaved itself. In 1888 modest men like Sir Henry Parkes forecast an Australian population of 50 million within the next century; optimists thought of 100 million or more. This giant was expected to remain a white, British Australia, linked to the mother country both by "the crimson thread of kinship", and by the more tangible ties of British investment, British markets for Australian primary products, and the defensive screen of the British navy. One of the first acts of the new Commonwealth inaugurated on January 1, 1901, was to establish the white Australia policy, effectively a British Australia policy.

These expectations have not been realized. Some 16 million Australians cluster round the edges of an empty land; Britain no longer provides Australia's investment, Australia's market, or Australia's defences; the "crimson

thread" remains, but immigration policy and alive all the rhetoric of immigration have changed. A new multiculturalism is one aspect of a revolution in a complex of associated values, reassessing everything from acceptable dress, or the lack of it, to the status of women, Aborigines and South-East Asian refugees. In the late 1970s, when Australian historians first began to consider the Bicentennial project that has now emerged as *Australians: A Historical Library*, Australian history itself was expanding into new fields and adopting new approaches. Women's history, regional history, urban history, Aboriginal studies were partly an indication of the collapse of the old regime, partly an attack on it. J. W. McCarty prophesied in 1978 that regional history might "fracture beyond repair the assumptions embodied in the general histories".

These new approaches, however, entailed not only a reinterpretation but frequently a condemnation of much of the Australian past, even the relatively recent past. The old belief that inferior races were doomed to extinction died hard and late. Aborigines were not

counted as part of the Australian population until 1971; there were still massacres in the late 1920s, when the white perpetrators were absolved by a Commission of Inquiry. Despite the early enfranchisement of women, frontier society and its mythology served to intensify and perpetuate the traditions of a white, male, British society. Australian nationalists questioned the British connection in favour of an independent republic in the southern seas, but they too accepted and glorified the bush legend, the optimistic forecasts of future development and the white Australia policy. From every point of view, even that of British imperialism, the past century of Australian history has gone wrong in one way or another. The guilt which Charles Wilson identifies in some Australian historians is an extreme reaction, but it is not surprising that Australian history at the Bicentennial is characterized by a certain ambiguity. If the Aborigines are part of Australian history, as they are in both *Australians: A Historical Library* and *The Oxford History of Australia*, does the Bicentenary become a day for the celebration of British settlement, or a "Day of Mourning" for the British invasion, similar to that declared by the Aborigines on the anniversary in 1938?

The move away from conventional political narrative represents an escape from such dilemmas into alternative dimensions. *Australians: A Historical Library* rejects chronological history. The ten volumes, plus a general index, are in two equal parts, "history" and "reference". The history is done in five "slices", essentially a "spatial" approach, examining Australia in particular years, chosen in part just because they are unexceptional. It also displays at times an uneasy pluralism, especially in the first two volumes, *Australians to 1788* and *1788-1988*. The creation of a nation, 274pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.95. 0 297 79227 X.

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Australians: The Guide and Index. 112pp. 0 949288 31 4 (available early 1988).

Jan Bassett: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Australian History*. 276pp. Oxford University Press. £8.95. 0 19 55432 6 X.
C. M. H. Clark: *A History of Australia*. Volume Six. 522pp. Melbourne University Press. \$Aus 35. 0 522 84152 2.
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ury and how it was achieved require more discussion than a few scattered paragraphs.

His are snapshots in the family album, descriptive but unrelated episodes. The difficulty is to give them coherence and purpose, a difficulty aggravated in the case of *Australians: 1838* by the formlessness of pioneer society itself and the absence of major events other than the Myall Creek massacre to contrast with the endless everyday that is the substance of "history from below". Each episode is interesting in itself, but in chapters like "People Meeting", the succession of their comes close to padding. *Australians: 1838* overcomes this problem by introducing early on a limited set of characters who recur through the book as illustrations of its themes. The shorter chapters are also an advantage, but stronger themes bring their own problems. With the exception of the chapter on "Cities", the section on "Regions" reveals all too clearly the limitations imposed by defining regions by occupation as economic rather than social units. "Labour", as William Lane remarked and as this volume demonstrates in subsequent sections, "is not the end of living; it is but the means." Like family albums, both volumes leave the future of their subjects blank. At the end, questions remain: what happened to Sarah Fairfax who, with her husband John, a bankrupt newspaperman, emigrated in 1838 to find work in the highly competitive publishing industry? Did Thomas Dobson, who arrived in Sydney in 1883 and was still poor and unemployed in 1888, ever find prosperity? A rummage in the *Historical Dictionary* reveals that Fairfax prospered; Dobson vanishes. A brief epitaph at the end of each volume might have been a finer recognition of natural curiosity.

The reference books are not all as happy either in conception or execution. The *Historical Atlas*, with explanatory text, is an imaginative and ambitious, perhaps too ambitious, undertaking. Much of it is in fact given over to the graphic representation of statistical in-

formation, often brilliantly but sometimes unnecessarily, since a volume of *Historical Statistics* is included in the series. The scope is staggering, covering not only the obvious areas of immigration, population, economic resources, religion, literacy and so on, but war, Depression, rabbits, bushrangers, larrikins, even the most common time for road deaths. It will be of immense value to teachers and students at all levels, and of interest to browsers, but desperately needs some basic maps showing mountains and rivers. A map of early exploration which sets the explorers' routes on a set-green plain conveys none of the difficulties experienced by the first settlers as they struggled for twenty-five years to cross the Blue Mountains.

The regional maps in *Events and Places* similarly neglect rivers and entail only a regional boundaries despite textual references to the importance of river transport and to places outside the region. Both the *Atlas* and *Events and Places* are easily read, the latter providing a train-window flash-past of Australia and Australian history. "Events" has the saddest entry for a former penal colony become nation about to celebrate its Bicentenary, the report of the O'Shannon Commission in 1984 "that crime permeated all sections of Australian life". Nevertheless, the quality and ease of use of the *Historical Dictionary* rise doubtless out of the wisdom of producing two distinct books rather than a two-volume dictionary, incorporating the material of *Events and Places* and reducing duplication. The illustrations are more striking for being unusual: political cartoons rather than the usual portraits; Bradman bowling. Carefully selected entries range from the inevitable politicians and industries to minority, racism and flies, as well as such quintessentially Australian characters as "Dad and Dave" and the "Little Boy from Manly". It is necessary to read the entry for Eureka, rather than Labor, to learn that Peter Lalor lost an arm in the fighting, and how a rebel with a price on his head became a member of the Victorian legislature within a year: Egon Kisch might have deserved a separate heading, but he can be found elsewhere through the index. In both cases the information is there. With reference books there is little room for compromise; they are good if they contain the information sought, useless if they do not. *Australians: A Historical Dictionary* is very good indeed.

Some overlap is to be expected in an undertaking of this magnitude, but the absence of cross-referencing, at least within the reference section, is less understandable. The Australian Inland Mission merits a brief entry in the *Historical Dictionary* and in substance, though not by name, in "Events". Neither entry indicates that there are good maps and a more detailed text in the *Atlas*. *Events and Places* specifically mentions travelers as potential readers, but ignores Bethany and Lobethal, two villages singled out by the *Atlas* in a fine spread on German settlement in South Australia, and easily accessible from Adelaide. In practice, rather than these bulky volumes the migratory might be better suited by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Australian History*, a truly pocket-sized guide which is still remarkably thorough. The entries are usually shorter, there are fewer politicians, warblers and institutions, but in compensation there are well-chosen entries on Australian phrases from the political "Men, Money and Markets" to Ned Kelly's "Such is life". It also shows what space can be saved by effective cross-referencing.

It is clear from the six volumes to hand that in terms of its objective of writing "for the general reader" with respect but without assuming prior knowledge, *Australians* is a magnificent collective achievement. The "slice" approach is little short of inspired for its purpose, offering "soft" social history, descriptive in an anecdotal style without the need for complex analysis or explanation. The integration of text and illustrations is superb throughout, and if there is little academic historian can get his teeth into, the whole is still easy, enjoyable and evocative reading. Between them the reference volumes will provide enough information to satisfy the requirements of far more than the general reader.

Another magnificent achievement has also come to an end in time for the Bicentennial, with the publication of the sixth and apparently final volume of Manning Clark's *History of Australia*, covering the years from 1916 to

1935. This project has been going on for so long, undeleeted by comments on earlier volumes, that there is little new to say. Volume Six is better organized and clearer than the two immediately preceding ones, but it remains vintage Manning Clark in its virtues and vices. There is the same almost interminable repetition, the same difficulty of disentangling either events or Clark's assessment, if any, from the welter of contemporary opinion. Superficially, this volume appears to offer a novel element in the Australian experience, the decline of faith as the First World War "placed God high on the list of missing persons". In practice those classic figures, the "straitlener" and the "enlarger" of life, appear in new secular disguises. The former is murdered by multiculturalism in the epilogue. The history is narrative, almost exclusively political and intellectual, but narrative of Clark's own kind, told through personalities almost all of whom still suffer from the now famous fatal flaw or tortured soul. If this is not visible it is only because of the success that same, like Billy Hughes and S. M. Bruce, have in concealing their own private hell.

Labor leaders fare better than most. John Curtin has his private weakness, but gains redemption by overcoming it; James Scullin is overdone by events he can neither control nor comprehend, but no one comes up to expectations. Labor prebendalists are at fault for pursuing votes not visions; visionaries for their failure to provide an alternative to the "bourgeois" ideals of the Nationalists and Liberals, and for their sheer ineptitude. No one wins, except perhaps the genre of "Yarra-side", who devised the political system of federation for their own benefit, exploited both Hughes and Lyons, and created from the Anzac legend a "secular religion" of loyalty to Crown and Empire to sustain their position. Sops to the masses in the form of political democracy and material comforts were a small price to pay for continued political control and economic privilege. On what the alternative might be and how it might be achieved Clark is silent. He aspires to "the light on the hill", but can no more see behind it than those who coin such phrases.

Despite the stylization, the twists, turns and inconsistencies, this is still epic history. The *History of Australia* is a history of Western man, Australia's twentieth-century "Kingdom of Nothingness" and "Age of Ruins", a general experience in a particular place. Manning Clark himself is not simply, perhaps hardly at all, an Australian historian of Australia, but a saving remnant of the 1930s, a rationalist visionary who has lost his faith in rationalism. Part of the epic quality derives from the forces that lurk at the edges of his history, "the spirit of the place" or quite simply an implication of Fate, or the Fates, that toy with human aspirations and the flaws of those who seek fame and power. A mythic Australia fills the gap left by the demise of both nationalism and God. Remote from Europe, Australia might have freed herself from Old World prejudices and errors; her Age of Ruins was not inevitable.

The theme is always contrapuntal but at various levels: juxtaposing federation and revolution; Lawson and Deakin, Hughes and the Labor Party, "the people" and the bourgeoisie; Curtin and Menzies, posing a hypothetical alternative between an Australia chained to an imperial past and a bourgeois society, and an Australia liberated to determine her own future, between "the old dead tree and the young tree green", the book's subtitle taken from Henry Lawson's "A Song of the Republic". It is also a literary device highlighting the chance of revolution to create dramatic tension. It works wonderfully well, especially during the crisis of 1929-32 when Scullin's federal Labor ministry was confronted by possible bankruptcy, the revolt of Jack Lang's Labor government in New South Wales, and working-class militancy. But, as always, Clark is forced to retreat. This was Australia, and Australians were not revolutionaries. In ending in 1935 he has made his *History of Australia* into an Old Testament: the Messianic has yet to come. The succeeding prophet was all too down, Curtin by Deakin, Chifley by the Generals, Whitlam by the Governor-General, or more realistically by the electorate again. At each opportunity, the stillborn dream of a new society is rebuffed.

has so far refused to move. The epilogue ends in a message of hope. In a post-Christian, post-Enlightenment world the old constraints have gone, the opportunity is greater than ever.

The villains in this history without heroes are less the bourgeois politicians of the Nationalist and Liberal parties than the vast majority of Australians who have always rejected their visionaries in favour of the Australian dream, a block of land and a house, the materialist mediocrity and philistinism of the Australian suburb. For Manning Clark, as for the vast majority of historians, this dream is inadequate; affluence has eroded the old virtues of the bush. His argument that it demonstrates the petty-bourgeois values of the modern Australian working class is an application of the concept of false consciousness that entangles the Australian "nationalist prophet" in the coils of a tired European theory. The shearer's dream was of good food, a shed in which the pens were polished mahogany and the sheep came pro-washed; of roustabouts who were girls dressed as boys, waltzing in with beer and whisky every hour; of evening dances by the billabong to a German band. It was more bucolic, but not less materialist or less philistine. If there was a rustle in the bush, it was not the pages of *The Brothers Karamazov* being turned.

The difference is myth, the heroic stature accorded to the old bush workers by the Australian legend. Both Clark and Charles Wilson regret the Australian tendency to "cut down the tallest poppy", hanker after heroes, and lament the lack of purpose in modern Australia. Neither shows any understanding of the chronic insecurity that had been the historic experience of the working class until well after the Second World War. Wilson's remark that "the years from 1872 to 1893 were a Golden Age for the wage-earner" has to be seen in this context. They were better years than those before or after, but for the poor, the shearer, the selector, the miner, their wives and families they were still hard, insecure years. Not least among the virtues of *Australians* is that its perspective from below and its anecdotal style highlight the risks of everyday life for the majority of the population. Apart from economic insecurity, work, childbirth, even play had its attendant dangers. In 1888 Thomas Dobson's son "was playing about and fell into a small lake of slaked lime". He was rescued. It will be interesting to see if the twentieth-century volumes of *Australians* can do the same for the suburbs, filled as they are by the inarticulate and the powerless". Contrary to Eleanor Dark's desire, the need is not for a new myth for the suburbs, but of them. J. A. Froude, the subject of one of Wilson's interestingly irrelevant chapters, pointed the way: "It is hard to quarrel with men who only wish to be innocently happy." But he wrote to blissful ignorance of twentieth-century intellectual puritans.

On all this innovation and overheated narrative, Wilson's *Australia 1788-1988: The creation of a nation* comes as a shower of cold fresh water. This is not in any sense a history of Australia, but a commentary on that history and on some Australian interpretations of it. It is uneven, self-indulgent in its choice of subject-matter, and so disjointed as to become almost notes at one point. Careless writing leaves several traps for the unwary: Earle Page not S. M. Bruce was the leader of the Country Party; Hugh Streaton not Hugh Streaton wrote *Idea for Australian Cities*; the passage on the Flinders Island Aboriginal settlement is a complete muddle. The first fifth of the book does not get beyond 1792, reusing the arguments for the decision to settle; and the problems that faced Phillip on arrival, Wilson plumps firmly, but reasonably, for the fence. Transportation killed many birds with one stone: the problem of convicts, the possibility of naval supplies, a base in the south-eastern Pacific, and not least the need to pre-empt other European powers, especially France. The remainder is devoted to expounding the theme that a counter-factual alternative history is in cloud-land. The subtle device, created by the British expedition of 1788-9, settled by British convicts and immigrants according to British customs, laws and institutions, developed by British capital and de-

veloped, at least until 1939, by British power.

The settlement, and by implication its achievement on the Aborigines, was justified because Australia was in international law *terra nullius*. The early governors, under strict instructions from a paternalist and humane Colonial Office, were well inclined towards the Aborigines, as were at least some settlers. Repression was part of a "tragic fall into violence" as good intentions were lost with Aboriginal incomprehension, pastoral occupation by Aboriginal resistance. Wilson turns the idea that "these primitive Stone Age peoples really represented a culture naturally moulded to their environment", emphasizing instead the violence of Aboriginal society, especially towards women, which he regards as a principal factor in the population decline that followed white settlement. The rapid development of both the pastoral and mining industries that followed in the nineteenth century was only made possible by British investment, which created the opportunities that in turn sustained the rapidly rising immigrant population. It was not, either then or during the 1930s, an example of imperial enslavement to British banks, but of willing lenders and eager borrowers in the international money market, a transaction to the benefit of both parties.

Wilson's targets are both old Australian nationalists and new multiculturalists, whether historians, art critics, journalists, politicians or even film directors - all advocates of the view that the Aborigines were the victims of wanton white brutality, or even attempted genocide, supported by the British government; that the Australian economy was restricted to primary production in the interests usually of British, but more recently of American, Japanese and even Russian manufacturers; that the Australian worker was enslaved to the greed of British and international banks; and Australian soldiers were sacrificed from Gallipoli to Vietnam in the service of foreign imperialism. They are guilty, among other things, of neglecting and distorting evidence, "confused prejudices", the apologetic obfuscation of Australia's "origins", "nationalist narcissism", and "introverted, xenophobic isolationism". The "revived, narrow-minded Australian nationalism of the 1970s and 1980s... seems to derive from a mixed collection of fanatics and impressionables who are not peculiar to Australia. They are peculiar everywhere." And so on. It is good reading.

Much of it is also good sense, although the definition of pluralism which Wilson finds acceptable - "diversity within a generally accepted framework of institutions and values" - is weak enough to encompass the tyranny of the majority. His excessive concentration on economics, spurious legalism and failure to concentrate sound but scattered remarks on defence, all obscure the basic problem in the idea of an independent alternative Australia, the question of power. British governors, British settlers and British creditors had the power to enforce their view of the situation; Aborigines and the Australian working class shared a common impotence. More than this, the "imperial enslavement" argument is only a specific version of "wage slavery", a recognition that in global terms, it was Australia as a whole that was powerless, both militarily and economically.

This is something that even the most reasonable historians are reluctant to accept. A poor section on defence in *Australians: 1838* argues that Australia's agreement at the Colonial Conference of 1887 to pay a small subsidy in return for British naval protection created a "new two-way partnership", and that "the settlement colonies led by Australia had now become an essential part of the economic well-being and security of the British as a world power in the south Pacific". This is a gross exaggeration. Australia had no navy to speak of at the time or for many years afterwards, and lacked the resources and facilities to build one. When Britain ultimately sought assistance to maintain her interests in the region, she signed an alliance with Japan. Australia greeted the alliance with hostility, but in 1914 the Japanese navy assisted with the escort of the first troop convoy to Europe. When, in the next war, Japan became the enemy, and Singapore fell, Australia turned to America. Only at the century's forebears of Australia's population

made at the time of the Centenary had been realized, and combined with extensive industrial development, might the position have been different. In the distant European past, primitive technology made a number of small independent states a possibility, but in the 1980s, as Wilson points out, interdependence is essential. The irony of isolationist nationalism and counter-factual Australian history is that its ideology belongs to Europe's past, not Australia's future.

Judging by these books, looking inward seems almost a reflex action for Australian historians. The foreword to *Australians* presents the collection to "the people of Australia"; the Publisher's Note to the *Oxford History* anticipates that it will be "read and enjoyed by many Australians". Neither shows any concern to interest the rest of the world in Australian history. The "Isolation of Australian History" was the subject of a recent article in *Historical Studies* by Donald Denoon. His objective was to break through "procrustean national boundaries" and establish categories into which Australian history might be fitted, partly as the Australian experience abroad, partly as comparative history. He did not make the provocative point that in the present-day, assessment of the decisive events and influences in modern history, Australian history in isolation can be easily ignored. Transportation, immigration, especially Irish immigration, and comparative studies of "capitalist settler societies" attract some outside interest, but hardly bring Australia into the mainstream.

Denoon's suggested procedure also risks running into another of Wilson's targets, "substituting cut-price sociology for history". Moreover, it is unnecessary. For much of Australian history there is, as his examples show, a ready-made historical context for Australian history, that of British imperialism,

or more usefully, British expansion of the Empire. His comment that no one now writes from the perspective of Empire except to study from the seamy underside is substantially correct, but the solution is not to erect new, more fashionable-looking alternatives but to attempt to recover the historical experience of those for whom the Empire was a central part of their everyday environment, whether they lived in Australia, or Britain, or for that matter India, Kenya or Trinidad, whether they were British or colonial born, white, brown or black. Sir Edmund Barton's reference in the Australian Commonwealth parliament to France as "our nearest neighbour across the Channel" was less an error of geography than an expression of identity as his generation perceived it.

From this perspective, the isolation of Australian history is as much a loss to British as to Australian history. Wilson, for example, observes that British immigrants brought trade unionism with them, but he misses the central point that the Australian and British labour movements found different solutions to the apparently similar problems that faced them in the 1890s. John Rickard's study *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth* is Australian history, but it reveals assumptions made by the British Labour movement that go unnoticed by historians because unspoken by contemporaries, not least its reflex rejection of protection and arbitration. Recent changes in Australian attitudes and practice have created for Australia what European countries with longer histories have long possessed, a past distinct from the present. It is best understood not in isolation but in a wider imperial context.

The new element in Australian history, traceable with hindsight to the First World War, is that it is post-colonial, rather than post-Christian or post-Enlightenment. This is

the lesson of Stuart Macintyre's excellent Volume Four of the *Oxford History of Australia: The Succeeding Age*, which realistically treats Australian nationalism in the past as history. For Macintyre, Australian nationalism is susceptible of different meanings and political associations, radical and anti-imperial before the First World War, conservative after it, in which form it was integrated into loyalty to the modified post-war Empire/Commonwealth. The urgency of development in the 1920s, especially land settlement, had awareness of Australia's exposed defensive position behind it. That the cost was too high and the loans too many is a reflection of the difficulty of colonizing the desert. Macintyre puts the ambitious forecasts of the Centenary, and the post-1918 myth of "Australia Unlimited", firmly into the context of the possible.

The best aspect of this book, however, is the integration of history from below with high politics, completely vindicating the prefatory rejection of such "spatial" distinctions. This is apparent in its consideration of the working classes and arbitration, and even more in that of the position of women and the family. "Separate spheres" began with attitudes, but found its way into official policy in the Arbitration Court's judgment that a man should have a "family wage", but a woman a single person's wage, and in factory legislation and compulsory education which removed children from the labour market, but extended childhood, and thus motherhood. The transformation of household drudgery into the science of home economics endorsed by experts increased domestic responsibilities, negated the liberating possibilities of labour-saving tools and enhanced the distinction between the private world of the family and the public world of work. While commenting on respectable conformism, of which "separate spheres" was one manifestation, and cen-

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worship another, Macintyre still appreciates, as Manning Clark does not, the insecurity that haunts the reality of the suburbs.

If the *Oxford History of Australia* continues with the standard Macintyre has set, it will become the basic narrative history of Australia, and the complement that *Australians* needs. Macintyre's early descriptive chapters, which make good use of the new areas of research, are highly reminiscent of *Australians*: 1888. The only qualification is that rather more explanation is required in the right place. For example, Macintyre does not explain either the Harvester Judgement or Theodore's monetary proposals until some time after his first references to them; Scullin appears from nowhere as federal Labor leader and Prime Minister, as does Curtin as federal Labor leader in 1935, while the two men whose chief led to the Kyabram movement are never

named, apparently through oversight; the Australian navy hobs to the surface as if it had always been ready-formed at the bottom of Sydney Harbour, awaiting the kiss of Alfred Deakin or Andrew Fisher.

Possibly in the light of Patrick O'Farrell's recent and subtle book, *The Irish in Australia*, the Irish influence is understated, with Archbishop Mannix only really appearing in the conception controversy where he is unavoidable. Macintyre finds it necessary to defend his "lapse" into high politics, an indication perhaps of its current standing in Australia. High politics here is in fact more public policy and the social alignments behind party politics than the more usual intrigue of smoke-filled rooms. The book also includes one fine misprint, in describing the "Darwin rebellion" of 1918 when angry workers forced the government to send "a naval vessel" to

rescue the Commonwealth administrator. A man perhaps of Cascaean ambition.

British readers will get most out of this book if they also have some basic knowledge of British history. Macintyre not only sets Australian history within its imperial framework, but on occasion points out the parallels either with Britain, or with white settler societies. Even when he does not, they appear starkly. In both Britain and Australia, the tribulations of the 1890s led to trade-union-based, largely oppositional, pragmatic parliamentary Labour parties; in both countries the party of the left, in office at the outbreak of the First World War, split over the conduct of the war, specifically conscription; in what must surely be pure coincidence, both split parties were led by short, fiery Welshmen, who continued in office in peacetime conditions outnumbered by their former enemies, until they were, almost simul-

taneously, dropped. These and other similarities with differences create from a book on Australian history a commentary on British history that is at once fascinating and enlightening. It is very superior, sophisticated general history.

With awareness of Australia due to be raised by the Bicentennial celebrations, there is an opportunity to reduce if not end the isolation of Australian history, if Australian historians wish to do so. Manning Clark's *History of Australia* is already a classic. Stuart Macintyre's *Succeeding Age and Australians: A Historical Library* incorporate in their respective ways the constructive aspects of the new currents in Australian historiography. Both deserve to be thrust on to a wider stage, as statements not just about Australian history to other Australians, but about Australia to the world.

A local habitation and a name

Peter Porter

PAUL CARTER
The Road to Botany Bay
375pp. Faber £14.95.
01971 435515

If you could hover, God-like, on January 26 next year (Australia Day) above the bountiful estuaries and harbours of the continent of Australia, from the Swan River in the West to Port Douglas, north of Cairns, with Botany Bay and Port Jackson as your hub, you would see, riding at anchor, the most obvious symbols of prosperity and progress, the yachts of the leisured classes on the smooth waters of a tamed littoral. Two hundred years after Governor Phillip's landfall, the Europeans have made the land their own. But that the scene would differ much from a similar panoptic vi-

sion of Burnham-on-Crouch, St Tropez and Portoferrario - the twentieth century has homogenized the way we live. But in 1988 the Old World will be bringing tributes to this most recently successful part of the New - and the New itself will be responding enthusiastically: a re-enactment of the First Fleet, a spate of conferences for experts, a rash of concerts, poetry readings and dramatic scenes, and a publishing programme of commissioned works with its own form of "militarist" obit.

"And grave by grave we civilize the ground", wrote Louis Simpson about America. Australia is a big place: something quicker than the grave will have to be found. It looks as if one civilizing avenue will be the magic carpet of semantics and theory. Already the young critics and semioticians of Sydney are in teleprinter contact with the latest ideas from Paris, and no Australian university could ever be provincial or obscure enough to resist the fashions of Chicago and Yale. In this book Paul Carter presses a most refined bouquet of theoretical blossoms on to the oldest of Australian enclaves, "The Birth of a Nation". *The Road to Botany Bay* is about how the map-makers, navigators, explorers and settlers turned "space into place". Indeed, Carter's book might be described as a fantasy on one note, since "space" and "spatial" occur in almost every paragraph. Thirty pages in, I made a note for my later perusal, "What is spatial history?" Three hundred pages later, I still didn't know, but I had certainly encountered spatial concepts of a bewildering order during my reading. This study is probably intended as a rite of passage, a signal to the rest of the world that Australia has grown up and can be admitted to the company of the serious nations: spatial history has wrestled Imperial history out of the ring, though by Imperial history Carter seems to mean no more than a linear procession of narrative - one thing after another: the discoverers, the convicts, immigration, exploration, moving on to Federation, Nationalism etc.

In Australia itself, *The Road to Botany Bay* seems to have struck a note of recognition among the more internationalist-minded of the country's younger writers, and the jacket carries warm recommendations from David Malouf, Murray Bail and Peter Carey, as fine a triumvirate of present-day Australian taste as you'll find. Malouf's assurance that the book is dazzlingly original and that he couldn't put it down is surprising. Whenever he eschews theorist jargon, Carter writes elegantly, but his 370 pages of exposition are the hardest jungle of words I have ever had to fight my way through.

Much of what he expounds seems perversely dissonant with common sense, and riffs into the bargain. In his title chapter, for example, Carter relates how convicts run away from Sydney Cove to Botany Bay immediately after the transfer there of the fleet by Governor Phillip in January 1788. Because Botany Bay was the known and named place (Cook's legacy) and thus senior to Sydney Cove in spatial-historical terms, it could be described as Australia's "first other place". Such another place, argues Carter, helped to define Sydney, and he develops several arguments to adorn the aboriginal track which is his "road to Botany Bay", largely in terms of the open-endedness of time

leading both onwads and backwards. This "first other place" is less a brilliant rhetorical trope than its own chimerical other, a redundant truism. Conceiving it illuminates nothing. The convicts were hoping to scramble aboard the ships of La Pérouse's fleet which had arrived at Botany Bay a day or so after the First Fleet landed. They were either sent back or died in the bush, but their quest for the "other" would have proved illusory if they had succeeded, since every man of La Pérouse's squadron subsequently lost his life by shipwreck in the New Hebrides.

Carter pursues several main lines of investigation. First he examines how the Australian coast was named by its European discoverers, particularly Cook and Matthew Flinders; he then describes the way the featureless interior was surveyed and airy nothing gained its local habitation and its name; and further looks into the pioneer settlers' own acclimatization both of themselves in the land, and of the land to them. He concludes with a tribute to the Aborigines, who must have mixed feelings about the bicentenary of a usurpation, and whom he credits with existing spatially in a real sense since they live nomadically.

The business of naming finds Carter at his most inventive and frequently most ridiculous. Much of the detail he presents is interesting: it is the concepts he adorns it with which injure sense itself. Carter doesn't understand that names may not always be given by analogy or association, or even to honour those from whom preferment may fall, but in a purely arbitrary way, and yet stick and be found useful. Nor are pioneers being obsequious in seeking in a new land traditional classifications from the old - what else can they call the phenomena they encounter but hills, mountains, rivers, swamps and the rest? If the English language offered no immediate epithet for some of the creatures and places Europeans encountered in Australia, it is not surprising that names out of stock should have been summoned up on the spot - so we get wattle (for mimosa), mappies for those large black-and-white birds which are cousins to the currawong. Carter is carried away by his great love of words - not a poet's latitudinarian but a categorizer's. Early on, he announces, "the less there was to see, the greater the necessity to write about it"; but fails to apply the nostrum to his own exegesis. For all of his limited concern for the signs and signifiers of the Australian experience, he can do no more than turn it all into words. The old histories were sentimental as well as linear, but this new version, Carter-style, removes all the detonators. To parody Carter's own sort of paradoxical aphorism, the true road to Botany Bay runs through the Student Seminar.

The section dealing with Major Mitchell and with Matthew Flinders are more rewarding than the others. Carter makes forays into the travels of the explorers, namely Stuart, Eyre, Stuart, Leichhardt and Sturt. These are the names we learned at school. Australia has no history of battles and kings, and even more than America must seek her heroes in terms of endurance rather than victory. But Carter will give her some fallen idols. Major Mitchell's official explorations, and his self-conscious apologetics in naming the Victorian plains "Australia Felix" make him the perfect target

for Carter's late-twentieth-century revisionism. Mitchell was an interesting if pompous ideologue, who certainly travelled mythically as well as purposefully. Carter follows him like a private detective and brings forward some fascinating evidence. Mitchell's descriptions of the country he passed through resemble Marvell's "Instructions to a Painter" - they are propaganda. Mitchell was also emulating Camoens in *The Lusads*, the classic post-Virgilian epic of imperial destiny acted out as a voyage. Mitchell, the very opposite of the naive traveller, is a fair target, and it is affecting to observe that in grappling with him, Carter himself comes alive.

Flinders is more of a hero for Carter. Perhaps he could not find any real ground to quarrel with Flinders over, since Flinders is an exemplary traveller - courageous, industrious, level-headed and possessed of a humane sense of duty more stoic than imperial. Carter has fun reining the names Flinders bestowed on sightings in Spencer Gulf with places in his native Lincolnshire. If more of the theorizing of *The Road to Botany Bay* had been as playful as the section devoted to Flinders, the book would be more gratifying to read.

Carter quotes well from his explorers, diarists, memorialists and versifiers, and it is a pleasant surprise to discover how well these early Australians wrote. Yet, even here, his conclusions from the pioneers' words remain perverse where they are not wholly confusing. Anyone attracted to Carter's chapter on settlement in Gippsland, entitled "Debatable Land", will get far richer rewards from Laurie Duggan's recent topographical poem about the district, *The Ash Range*. There is much else on offer that is interesting - the influence on public and private life of the predominance of grid-plans in the layout of Australian cities; the verticality of flames and trees as home-coming signs ("like a good deed in a naughty world"); the suggestion that the sprawl of modern Australian suburbia repeats in its visual chaos the wilderness of the Outback. But one keeps on meeting statements which are infuriating in their point-making. In a discussion of the place of the picturesque in accounts of Australia, Carter points to the later Nationalist fondness for restoring Aboriginal names to places previously given European ones. But he goes further: this, he pronounces, "renders the Aborigines tacit conspirators in their own destruction".

Recently I crossed the North-West Coast of Australia in a Boeing 747 at 40,000 feet, the first time I had done so in daylight, and was able to see the land which stretched away below me for hours with no sign of man's presence. It resembled nothing so much as fold on fold of boarding-house bluntness in shades from chocolate to raspberry to lime. It seemed well beyond the grasp of words. Not Major Mitchell's nor Paul Carter's figures of speech could colonize this territory. Perhaps only facts and common sense will help us understand such a huge country. Next to "Anglo-Saxon" (in Australia, "Anglo-Celt"), there is no word more likely to call up cries of scorn among literary theorists than "common-sense", but *The Road to Botany Bay* shows what happens when those who luxuriate in words dispense with the nub of common experience which words carry with them.

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£5.95.
0207 152934

The Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets
312pp. Ringwood: Penguin. Aus\$16.95.
0140385753

JUDITH WRIGHT
Phantom Dwelling
30pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.50.
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Not so far in the future, suggests Ian McEwan in his novel *The Child in Time*. Britain hopes to be self-sufficient in wood. With his novel scarcely embarked on its career, McEwan's wheeze about self-sufficiency in wood has already entered the vocabulary of political debate, as a paradigm case of supposed folly: Thatcherite economics reduced to, or revealed as, absurdity. The idea that Australia can be self-sufficient in poetry ought surely by now to have attained the same status, as an example of how not to think about the relationship of literature and nationhood. But the idea goes on looking more plausible instead of less.

In the first place, Australian poetry, regarded as a totality, becomes steadily more rich: Does it need British and American poetry in any more profound sense than Pat Cash needs opponents? In the second place, the British (forget the Americans: this argument has always been about the British) have shown no more understanding, or even simple tolerance, of the Australian achievement in poetry than they did before. Indeed they have shown less. When Evelyn Waugh thought that the very idea of an Australian wine expert was hilarious, Australian wine was already excellent. Now that Auberon Waugh concedes this, do their producers need to feel gratified, or even interested? The endorsement seems as oblique as the condemnation. So why worry about the international status of an Australian poet? Isn't that the very clue to the proven vitality of the arts in Australia - that they at last stopped caring about anything beyond a local reception?

My own view, which I hope is a sane one and not just wishful thinking, is that Australian literature and the literature of the old world - the old world which, from the Australian viewpoint, includes most of what used to be called the new world - are bound in a permanent relationship, if only because the old world is a world elsewhere, and would have to be isolated even if Australia were truly isolated, or the world what it is isolated from? But the relationship never has been, and never can be, based on misunderstanding. Britain (because when we talk about the old world we are still talking principally, if not exclusively, of Britain) can't be persuaded, even if it wanted to, to appreciate Australian poetry in its full reality. One of the reasons why Australian poetry has attained its full wealth is that it has learnt to do without outside appreciation. So really it is vital to carry

In the early 1960s, the much missed British poet-critic Francis Hope pronounced himself unimpressed with an anthology of recent Australian verse. Hope singled out Bruce Dawe for particular disapprobation. So seemingly casual a dismissal was greeted with bitter protests in Australia. As it happens, Hope could not have been more wrong about Dawe, whose originality and solidity should have been apparent to him, especially since Hope himself was an accomplished poet, and no mere onlooker. But suppose Hope had said the right thing: would that have helped Dawe? Isn't it just as likely that such a clear sign of indifference helped arm Dawe for the long struggle, which he has pursued ever since, to please no critical taste except his own? So there is the first thing to say about the uncomprehending British: if an Australian poet truly believes that he is contributing to a self-sufficient national literature, then incomprehension from the British is just what he ought to welcome.

The second thing to say about the uncomprehending British is that they won't be talked out of their indifference by more evidence. As the Australian poets grow older, the British reviewers stay young, succeeding one another in brief generations. Thus there is always a new wave of impleachable young critics ready to greet the ageing Australian poet's collected works when a few copies of its latest, augmented version at last complete the long journey by ship, sent back as ballast in partial recompense for some huge consignment of novels by Margaret Drabble. More than twenty years after Francis Hope uncaringly enraged the Australian literary community, Blake Morrison in the *Observer*, reviewing yet another anthology of Australian verse, said, among other things less fatuous, that if the sample it contained of A. D. Hope's poetry was typical, then he (the reviewer) was glad that he had not read any more of it.

At least one reader thought that this was the most clear-out possible test case. Morrison, already a distinguished poet and critic, was the very kind of young British disestablishmentarian writer who was going to be impressed by Australian poetry if anybody was. A. D. Hope was the poet who was going, if anybody was, to impress him. Among Australian writers of any age, sex or stamp, A. D. Hope was, and remains, the unchallenged heavyweight. We quarrel with him; we wonder why he dislikes Hopkins; some of us can't credit that he finds Murphy amusing; but none of us doubts the magnitude of his achievement in poetry - the schooled yet spontaneous, mandarin yet demotic vitality and variety of it. And Blake Morrison had never even heard of it. Well then, let's call off the whole deal.

But the deal was never on. The British - meaning those few, few even among the literary, who are really involved with poetry - nowadays have barely enough time to be concerned with their own poets. They had time to when there was far less of it. Now that Australia has acquired, if it has, a literature of its own as a going concern, the lingering desire to have the mother country sniff its nappy must perforce be given up. Giving up that desire was in fact a precondition of an indigenous culture emerging at all. Everyone realized that - even those who were worried that an Australian literature left to judge itself might prove short of critical talent. These forego a great burgeoning of the second-rate. The first-rate had always been there, its inner strength reinforced by scorn of the indifference from abroad. Douglas Stewart, R. D. Fitzgerald, A. D. Hope, James McAuley, Gwen Harwood and Judith Wright had accomplished something beyond the dreams of their senior partner Kenneth Slessor. Slessor's splendid isolation had ultimately ceased to be fruitful. For the lack of an Australian literary community, he had dried up - if that phrase fits someone who sought the same solace as his predecessor Christopher Brennan.

But the above-named poets who came to prominence in the 1940s and 50s not only created their own variously enduring verse, they created, irreversibly, an Australian literary community in which it might be cherished. One of the reasons why Australian poetry has attained its full wealth is that it has learnt to do without outside appreciation. So really it is vital to carry



Brendan Heunessy's photograph of Les A. Murray is reproduced from his *An Australian Literary Calendar* (1987) (Pascor Publishing).

of Australian literature not just respectable but unchallengeably important. It is essential to note the fact (and to take in its implications) that A. D. Hope's internationalism and cosmopolitanism gave his patriotic concerns their dignity, guaranteeing them against the merest taint of nationalistic fervour. Hope (and from here on, in this survey, the surname stands for the Australian patriarch, not the British prodigy) wasn't just the Pushkin of the emergent Australian literary consciousness in modern times, he was the Belinsky: he was the poet-critic in his most benevolent manifestation. But even though Hope reigns supreme as a poet into old age, he no longer rules as a critic. The forces he helped to release were sure to take their own paths, and one of the paths they took was sure to be nationalistic. Rising with the Whitlam era but lingering long after, a broad school of Australian writing has based itself on the assumption that Australia not only has a history worth bothering about, but that all the history worth bothering about has happened in Australia.

It is only seemingly a paradox that this nationalistic school of writing seems ignorant of the poetic achievement of Hope, Stewart, McAuley, Harwood, Wright and all those other dedicated literary figures who paved the way for it. Nationalism is frequently unhistorical. Awkwardly for those finer spirits who would like to dismiss it in advance, it is also often energetic. Any dispassionate reader browsing along the poetry shelves of a good Australian bookshop at present (there is now a days usually a whole set of shelves, half of them filled with the glossy output of the University of Queensland Press) will find himself jolted by the force of expression of political views which seem to have been written down just as they were felt, with no intervening period of being thought out or even pondered.

Dating as it does from Gough Whitlam's fall, one would call this strain of verse reportage postlapsarian - if not for its innocence, which is prelapsarian, sometimes to the point that you can see the apple leave Eve's hand and reach itself to the tree of knowledge. At the moment Alan Wearne is the most prominent exponent of the genre. His long verse novel *Nightmarkets*, first published in 1985, is now out in a large-format Penguin. No less a critic than Chris Wallace-Crabbe, himself the author of poems which have earned their permanent place in the anthologies, has hailed Wearne as a prodigy. Certainly he has a voracity for fact. It is easy to see why Wearne is so well in with the editors of *Scrips*, who consider *Nightmarkets* a sure-fire bet to become a "classic of our literature". Its author is so solidly, or anyway heavily, in the tradition of Pound, Williams, Zukofsky, Olson and the yellow pages of the telephone directory. The dollops of the author's generation in the bleak years after Whitlam's political demise are treated with a sweep and proximity which will remind you of

John Dos Passos if you can forget Gavin Black. The urge to make the book poetic, however, has helped to ensure that it is not enough like prose, so as a novel it makes itself absurd, especially in the dialogue, which is stilted without being heightened.

"Haven't you had enough," Louise cried out "from those nasty shrill petticoat prigs of Women Who Want To Be Women?"

This is a mouthful for Louise to cry out. Saddled with the belief that "credence" and "credibility" mean the same thing, Wearne is not as well equipped as he might be for the precision he aspires to, but he deserves some points for seeing a gap in the market. Australian writing might not have actually needed a Hugh MacDiarmid, but after the Dismissal crisis - which did for the Australian intelligentsia roughly what Culloden did for the Scots - there was room for one: all he had to do was set up shop. Wearne's earlier verse novel *Oni Here* (first published in 1976, but now released in Britain) is really far preferable to *Nightmarkets*, if only for being so much shorter. By expanding his scope without increasing the compression of his language, Wearne has lowered the temperature of his work to the level where putative poetry stands revealed as cold rice pudding.

As a chronicle of events, however, *Nightmarkets* is of some interest. The author's urge to mythologize his friends should not be allowed to put the reader off. After all, Les A. Murray, in a surprising number of his excellent poems, mythologizes such crepuscular acquaintances as Bob Ellis, who looms in Murray's work as if he, Ellis, were Marlowe to Murray's Shakespeare. Avowedly pursuing failure with the same determination other men expend on the trail of success, not even Ellis, whose flakky confessional memoirs, *Letters to the Future*, have recently been published in Australia, is quite capable of being entirely uninteresting when recalling the salad days of the poets of his generation. The salads in those days were terrible, and something of those days - the lettuce moistened by nothing but beetroot juice, the onions with the same half-life as plutonium - has lingered in Ellis's untreated prose ever since. He has made a career out of complaining about his own capacity to fritter away his talent. Those who have good cause to doubt whether this latter entity naturally exists might be apt to dismiss his memoirs sight unseen, but they should be advised to entertain the possibility that Ellis might entertain them. Ellis's prose is so hit-and-miss that he can't even beat his breast without hitting himself in the eye, but his reminiscences are - this reviewer can vouch for it - pungently evocative of an epoch, now thirty years gone, when nobody even dreamed of a government subsidy, and to declare himself a writer was a serious commitment, even for a clown. (The previous generation of literary have had their

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JOHN DOS PASSOS

years of growth recorded in the distinguished prose of Donald Horne, whose latest chronicle, *The Lucky Country Revisited*, covers three decades of cultural change with a fastidiousness that never falters.

It should hardly need saying that merely to mention Les A. Murray is to heighten the tone of the discourse. When he is propagandizing for an Australian republic, Murray can be as postmodernist as anybody — he has written poems about the demise of the British Empire which could have come out of the first draft of the script of *Gullipoli* — but usually his language is too scrupulous to allow for anything less than a fully considered view, especially when it is a view about language itself. Murray when young discovered within himself, and without prompting, a sympathy for other languages. Diligent cultivation of this sympathy gave him the right and the wherewithal to argue powerfully, in his maturity, for the autonomy of the Australian vernacular. Murray's views on the subject are put in his book of essays, *Persistence in Folly* (reviewed in the *TLS*, August 9, 1985 — by Blake Morrison), and they are too subtle to be fairly summarized here, but broadly it can be said that he makes a self-possessed national stance plausible without denying — which, of course, most of the postmodernists emphatically deny — an intimate and inescapable connection with the outside world.

It is a great relief, while recommending Murray's prose, not to feel obliged any longer to recommend his poetry, the battle for international recognition of which may now be considered won. Probably it could not have been lost. The craze for Marianne Moore in Britain might have been specifically calculated to prepare for the advent of an Australian poet who looks that kind of stuff as natural as breathing. Murray's new collection, *The Daylight Men*, is about to be published in Australia by Angus and Robertson. No doubt, at the proper time, it will be reviewed at length in these pages, but

without jumping the gun it should be permissible to say that an already mature talent now shows signs of maturing further, into the mastery that can leave an effect understated. In "Bats" (Ultrasound) the first four lines of the opening stanza are of a Marianne Moorean quality that might almost be called routine. The really astonishing effect is in its understated last line.

Sleeping-lagged in a duplex wing
with fleas, in rock-cleft or building
radar hats are darkness in miniature,
their whole face one tully crinkled ear
with weak eyes, fine teeth bare to sing.

"Fine teeth", already a standard phrase in conversation, is quietly brought back to full life. The whole book is alight with Murray's usual dazzle, but there is a new sleuth underneath. Murray's verse has been published in the United States and is by now so well known in serious British poetry magazines that his presence rivals that of Peter Porter, except that Murray works the trick without giving up his absence. Speaking, however, as one who participated, if only marginally, in the campaign to get Murray reviewed recently abroad, I feel free to voice a doubt as to whether this victory, any more than any other, escapes the law of unintended consequences. It only takes one Australian poet making it abroad to revive the idea, both at home and abroad, that making it abroad is the thing to do. While growing up less ready to insist that a British audience will find much to enjoy in Murray's poetry, one should acknowledge a sharpening, perhaps astute, urge to point out that he gets a lot of his strength from being so involved with what happens in Australia, and that other poets who have not attained escape velocity have not necessarily failed to do so because they lacked the power. It could be that they just liked the gravity.

The question of what precisely Australian writers have lost or gained by being or not being expatriates has been often discussed without really being debated. But nothing should be allowed to detract from Peter Porter's achievement. His poetry is the embodiment of what drives, or ought to drive, the Australian expatriate writer — a centrifugal force which pulls the world together. The Australian expatriate critic need not feel guilty about pointing to Porter's *Collected Poems* (1983) as the best, as well as the most conveniently available, example of what Australian poetry has to offer the world. But the critic is bound to feel guilty about what he doesn't point to. Bruce Dawe is of an age with Peter Porter. His poetry is published only in Australia, and then only in his off-puttingly entitled compendium *Sometimes Gladness: Collected poems 1954-1982*. If the title sounds like Rod McKuen talking, nothing in the book sounds quite like anyone else on earth. Without leaving home, Dawe made a journey into the American language. I remember in the 1950s coming across a poem he wrote about a wrestler called Drop-kick Joe Savoldi. It was clear that Dawe liked the American lilt of that name. It was equally clear that he was not ashamed of liking it. There was no need, Dawe had realized, to go in quest of the golden fleece. The golden fleece would come to him. But it would be made of nylon. Dawe was the first Australian poet to take the measure of the junk media and find the poetry in their paths. He wrote better about the Vietnam war than any other poet, including American poets; and he could do so because he wrote better about television.

Say, are those plumed shadows
Flying Horsemen of the Flat Air Cavalry Division,
or Britches bringing the gospel of iron
to conquer the Egyptians?
What are we up to now?

Above all, Dawe had the originality to admit the fact — which should have been obvious, but wasn't until he articulated it — that the saturating, penetrating impact on Australian culture wasn't British, it was American. The British influence is mainly political, and can be outgrown, although the wise will be careful enough to outgrow it gratefully. The American influence, however, must either be dealt with or succumbed to. Dawe dealt with it. His sense of humour helped. His poetry sounds easy — genuinely funny things always sound easy — and never are — but it represents a feat of strength.

because the Australian language was so much smaller than the American that for the first to absorb the second was like a snake swallowing a donkey.

Dawe consciously assimilated an alien idiom. Younger poets have been able to assimilate the world entire, sometimes without using their brains at all. The sons and daughters of the immigrants have grown up with a houseful of connections to the old world, which cheap air travel has put less than twenty-four hours away. Where Australian poetry was once faced with the dilemma of either being parochial if it defended itself or of losing its identity if it went international, the problem has now disappeared, leaving only the threat of drowning in its solution. The University of Queensland Press seems willing to print any poet in Australia who can't find a commercial publisher. By no coincidence the UQP poets vary widely in quality. Richard Kelly Tipping, in the preface to his collection *Nearer By Far*, tells us that its contents have been "chosen from the high pile of certified verbal artefacts resulting from my 24th to 34th years to heaven". The illusion to Dylan Thomas might not be enough to persuade the reader that Tipping, born in 1949, is impelled by a similar heroic gift, or any other kind of gift except menial, unimpressive enthusiasm.

& I am a tender squire, bleeding in a troy
in the electrified window of time —

Both in name and style, Tipping sounds as if Osbert Lancaster made him up, but the inimitable Thomas Shapcott — the Michael Throsvitz of the South Pacific — assures us that "Tipping is witty". No such fatal endorsement disfigures the cover of John Blight's *Holiday Sea Sonnets*. Blight was born in 1913 and has spent a lifetime lying so low he has hardly been heard of — an approach to poetry that recalls lun funweather's approach to painting. But if Peter Porter's admiration for Blight sounds excessive, the merest glance at any poem in the book will instantly prove that it is not misplaced. Here is a stranded raft:

A snap decision of the waves
has tossed it at high tide across
the reef.

Punning on a whole phrase is a trick for which Geoffrey Hill has been applauded and the Martians elevated to the status of mogicians. It is a crowd-pleasing thing for poetry to do, but for a long time Blight has been doing it far from any crowds at all, and one might almost say that such a knack was fundamental to Australian poetry. One says "almost" because in Australia, as elsewhere, most of the poets have no verbal characteristics whatsoever. Thomas Shapcott, the demigod of the UQP phalanx, can't. I think, he said to write poetry in any way that distinguishes it from prose chopped up. But his range of artistic reference is fully extended into space and time, as if Michael Kustow had met Dr Who. Shapcott's latest collection, *Travel Dice*, reveals, among many other things, that he has been in Belgrade; that he has stood in awe of Piero di Cosimo, Titian and Goya; and that he can't

spell Davy Crockett but is willing to try. Like all the UQP poets rolled together only more so, he sees nothing wrong with trying to get it all in. To that end, of course, lack of a specific poetic talent can be a positive help, and if there is no particular gift for prose either then the pen can just fly along, because while not everything looks like a prose sentence, anything can pass for a line of verse.

Time spat a capsule of saliva.
It was a plane shinning in rare atmosphere.
Now it has landed.

The UQP enterprise is doing its considerable best to put poetry on an industrial basis, rather like Faber in Britain, and so far with a similar exemption from the sceptical heckle. On the whole it is probably better for poets to think of themselves as industrialists than as artists — it is better for them to think of themselves as almost anything than as artists — but when the hard-nosed, high-productivity, *Stakhanovite* attitude towards grinding the stuff out is accompanied by vociferous claims to a government grant, the resulting picture of subsidized careerism is not attractive. Reminders that Australian poets once had to look after themselves, and profited from the solitude, are always useful.

Such aids to memory can be found in the anthologies, where poets not generally acclaimed can be found to have done excellent particular things — ie, poems. First the poems, and then in the course of time, the poet: that is the desirable order, which ambition will always try to reverse. In *Australian Poetry 1986*, edited by Vivian Smith, Philip Hodgins has a Martians-move-over poem about a dam: "Two tibets stund on the rim like taps". Mr Hodgins sounds like the sort of poet who is content to wait, both for the right idea and for eventual fame. In the *Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets*, Gwen Harwood is the outstanding example of a poet who has gradually attained the first magnitude in her art without ever having had a perceptible career. She has been a miracle of self-effacement: compared with Harwood, Judith Wright is Anna Akhmatova. In the long term, however, intensity must out. Edited with a lethally po-faced feminist introduction by Susan Hampton and Kate Llewellyn, this anthology is nevertheless a gold-mine, mainly because so many intelligent Australian women have written good poems without having had time to be poets. Such, indeed, is one of Harwood's continuing themes, which she discovered early in her precociously accomplished preface years, and has gone on elaborating into old age. She was a feminist of the new school while the old school was still current. She never needed, however, to raise her voice, which has always deployed itself in the quiet, effortlessly attention-getting range between Blossom Dearie seated at the piano and Mary Stuart kneeling at the block.

Baby, I'm sick to death,
but I can't die. You do
the songs, you've got the breath.
Give them the old soft shoe.
Put on a lovely show.
Put on your wig and go.

Canberra

Ah, but it is capital to be here, dozing
Through a dream city, verdantly inside-out.
Rural in the middle but not a whit amazing.
Where the wire-mesh in-tray handles grief and doubt.

Spruces and English elms, pansies, asters,
The town deployed like a classical symphony
Over which the insufficiently mad minelers
Are planning to unfuck the economy.

They are building a new zoo for the hawks and peacocks:
A stadium. If you like, of marathon fougues
Lashing statesmanly wisdom from the rocks.

Alt, how daggly this pumped-up village became,
Griffin's part-flooded map with Cloud Cuckoo hungs,
Such volumes of beer and paper defiling the game.

CHRIS WALLACE CRABBE

All of Harwood's poetry moves and sings with that deceptively simple formal elegance. Younger poets — and I do not exclude Les Murray, who has so forgotten his early stanzaic neatness that when he now attempts Burnian metres they limp as if shot — would do well to wonder how she does it. A. D. Hope has always praised Harwood as an equal. Some of us have been too slow to realize the rightness of that judgment, dazzled as we were by her lack of fame. Getting the measure of a talent like hers is made easier by Angus and Robertson's Modern Poets series, which first devoted one of its paperbacks to her selected poems in 1975. These little volumes are the best available introduction to Australian poetry, which has so expanded as a field of study that the visitor, with the best will in the world, might be honestly puzzled about how to find a way in. One wouldn't want to suggest that all of this critical busyness, even at its most painfully academic, is a waste of time. Some of the post-modern poets whose lifetime achievements added up to something too slim for a Modern Poets volume are still well worth studying, both for their works and for the implications of their careers, which were often difficult and sometimes heroic. Lex Banning's *There Was a Crooked Man*, edited by Richard Appleton and Alex Galloway (100pp. Sirius, Aus\$12.95, 0 207 15459 7), is an indispensable volume for anyone who admired his poetry when it was coming out in Sydney in the 1950s. Banning was a poet, so cruelly stricken that it took him an age to get out a sentence, but when he was holding court in Lorenzini's wine-bar he was never heard to say anything that was not worth the long wait. "Your poem has a sort of irrational logic", a critic once said to him, adding: "I suppose that's a bad way of describing it." Banning's answer took almost a minute to emerge: "It's a bad way of describing logic."

Banning was condemned to bohemianism, he wanted a normal life. His acutely intelligent verse, little though there is of it, raises all the questions about how urbanity in Australian poetry has to be brought about by an act of will. But there is no use supposing that Banning will be considered more than a minor figure by the outsider who is trying to take a general view of Australian poetry. Larger claims can and have been made for David Campbell. A collection of essays, *A Tribute to David Campbell*, has just come out. Well edited by Harry Rossetine, if vitally set on what must have been a hard press once dropped, with unnecessary violence, to partisans in Yugoslavia, this post-

humous Festschrift leaves no room for doubt that Campbell's attempt to remain obscure was doomed to failure. He was widely admired, and from his *Selected Verse* (168pp. Angus and Robertson, Aus\$8.95, 0 207 13532 0) you can see why, although it is hard to suppress the suspicion that in his case a small pocketable volume is just the right size, because he was repetitive, and too often content to be dilute. He was a gentleman and an amateur.

The Australian old masters have traditionally been more serious than that. What the old masters now need, and have not got, is a form of publication befitting their stature. Kenneth Slessor's Modern Poets paperback (160pp. Angus and Robertson, Aus\$7.95, 0 207 15820 7), for example, gives his essence, but everything it leaves out is essential too. Slessor needs a single-volume Pléiade-style thin-paper Collected Works which would contain his poetry, his light verse, his critical prose and his war diaries. These last are currently available as a single volume, *The War Diaries of Kenneth Slessor*, edited by Clement Semmler (623pp. University of Queensland Press, £25, 0 7022 1879 0), but it is a hefty, overblown production whose insane initial price ensured its arrival in the remainder shops by the direct route from the warehouse. A properly organized national publishing venture would resolve such anomalies.

Who should be Pléiadeized, and who not, would be a question guaranteed to arouse heated answers, as it does in France. The only good reason for not putting out A. D. Hope or Judith Wright in a standard set straight away is that they are still productive. Judith Wright's *Collected Poems* (310pp. Angus and Robertson, Aus\$10.95, 0 207 13219 4), while not to be foregone, is so far from representing the culmination of her achievement that it might with more truth be said to mark the end of her first phase. She has brought out several volumes since, and the fate of the latest one, *Phantom Dwelling*, exemplifies the condition of the major Australian poets in the twentieth century. It was published in Britain in 1985 and sank like a stone, with scarcely a single review, even an unfavourable one. For things to have been otherwise, there would have had to be justice. But as with any other product, there is no innate justice in the marketing and consumption of poetry. The point was put more simply by Talleysand: he who is absent is wrong. There were too many home-grown Martians for an offshore Martian to get a look in, especially when she could do so many other things as well.

Unanswered questions

Sylvia Lawson

ROSS TERRILL
The Australians: In search of an identity
344pp. Bantam, £12.95.
0 993 010 19 1

Only twenty years ago, "national identity" was a new phrase in Australia, sharp enough to cut some ice in the cultural-nationalist polemics for the re-establishment of a feature-film industry. It was part of the shiny new vocabulary of the intellectual left, the language that helped vote Whitlam to power in 1972; it had strategic value.

It is still intoned by politicians in need of an excuse, and crops up in complacent liberal rhetoric deployed by old Whitlamites in powerful positions. No one else uses it seriously — except, perhaps, the expatriate who refuses to acknowledge the foreignness of what was once his own country.

I have returned to search for a new Australia bursting from an old skin. I have come to see how much of the past British flavour lingers, and how great the Australian indigenous are. . . . And what of social values? Have the civil rights belatedly won by Aboriginals brought them into the mainstream of Australian life? . . . Above all, I am wondering, as I drive into Melbourne under a high wide sky of blue with banks of silver, if Australia can solve its problems. Only find itself.

The quote is not unfair to the prevailing tone of Ross Terrill's book, which is a sizeable publishing event — a run of 10,000 copies in Australia — with issues in Britain and in the United

States, and free copies given to people travelling first-class on Qantas.

Dr Terrill, a political scientist, went from Melbourne University to Harvard in the mid-1960s; then, he says, he "found it too hard to go back" and became an American citizen. Between 1983 and 1986 he made four quick visits home, touring widely, talking to two former Prime Ministers and the present one, state premiers, successful bureaucrats and writers, publishers, academics, a union leader, a powerful mining magnate and a titled member of the ruling class. He rarely quotes anyone who lacks material or cultural status, and does not acknowledge that he moves on a level of privilege from which he never has to step down, least of all when stumping it on an Aboriginal outstation in Central Australia, dropping in on an inner-city black ghetto, or going back to his home town in East Gippsland to "collect my thoughts". Much of the talk goes on in Sheratons and Hiltons, and he flies everywhere, skimming the country's conflicts as he does the terrain.

The outcome is a tourist's haul of snapshots, very few of them in focus, with stereotypical impressionism on cities and regions, caution on multi-culturalism and Aborigines, and much hedging of bets. The complaints of free-market entrepreneurs get generous space; so do the opponents of Aboriginal land rights, although Terrill does not explain what such rights entail. Claiming friendship with Gough Whitlam, and trading heavily on old new-left credentials through his student years, Terrill nevertheless disparages much that the Whitlam government set in train: anti-discrimination and pro-

It is good for Australian literature, and for its life in general, that there can be no serious argument about the role of women, which in poetry is at least equal to that of men and can plausibly be thought of as supreme. Australian poetry, in this way and in many others, is a very satisfactory field of creativity. Whether the world should be told, however, is an open question. Perhaps the world should be left to find out for itself. Australian civilization might do better to retain the element of surprise.

There is also the consideration that the Australian expatriate, once the secret is all the way out, will lose his privileged status as a barbarian. It has always been a rewarding role to play. Cavally evoked an ancient Rome dying of impatience because the barbarians were late. If anything, he understated the case. At present, an Australian expatriate in London or New York has only to mention Proust or Rilke and he is greeted as an avatar, as if Paracelsus had come to town. When Australia is correctly regarded as a nation artistically fertile like any other, and more so than any other nation in its size — which it ought to be, considering how free and rich it is — the law of rising expectations will make the expatriate's tent show a bit less of a sure-fire smash hit. There would also be the grim possibility that the British scholars, critics and reviewers finally would start taking Australian poetry seriously, with all the grief, rage, academic apparatus and undignified jockeying for position that that would entail.

A possibility is all it is. By now, achievement can be relied on to outrun understanding — an order of events which is practically the definition of a living culture. Like the Australian cities, where the place to go and the thing to do are nowadays always in the next edition of the guidebook, Australian poetry is currently running miles ahead of anybody's ability to sum it up. The Modern Poets series has done well to include some of the younger talents, among whom it is not absurd to count David Malouf (128pp. Angus and Robertson, Aus\$7.95, 0 207 14108 8), who is in his early fifties but so obviously only half-embarked on his prodigious career that he ranks as a beginner. In Malouf's poems the whole complex theme of Australia's position in regard to the world which supplied its modern population, if not wrapped up, at least raised up and illuminated.

The nineteen tongues of Europe
migrate to fill a silence, we're digging in for the long
wait.

Malouf, like Joseph Brodsky, is a culture-

conservation measures, and state patronage — in a country with almost no tradition of private benevolence.

He also badly underestimates the Aboriginal cultural recovery, which has continued in the teeth of political setbacks and persisting social injustice. He went twice to the Northern Territory, where Aborigines have been re-inventing television and video, for their purposes and ours: but Terrill didn't notice. His Alice Springs anecdotes are set mainly in a restaurant, with adjoining vineyard. There and elsewhere, he gives much colour-supplement detail: "Hawke is a handsome man with a spectacular head of silver hair, large blue eyes, and sensual hands." Other VIPs are noted tackling their steak or flounder, or downing their Orlando Chandonnay. But for all the detail on our leaders, this is no guide to Australian politics, or to any other institution. A very important one, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, is mis-titled in the index.

Terrill cannot probe the contradictions, which his many interviews (or "chats") partially expose; he cannot even properly acknowledge them; he has no clear position from which to speak. But the history most damagingly absent is his own. We never find him changing his mind, back-tracking, reconsidering; nothing happens to him — or nothing he can allow us to see. Perhaps the many descriptive embellishments, worth so little at face value, work to conceal the lies and footshits of an expatriate's unease. Dogged by an awkward presence called "Australia", he tries to buy it off, wrapping up the problems in a smooth question-and-answer pack.

vulture with the range and cruising altitude of a condor. They are both men with a mission. Brodsky's mission is to represent his country in exile. Malouf's is to help build a new country by pouring his background into its foundations. These are very different tasks, but theirs are not very different talents. They share the selective gift of being able to objectify, in a passing phrase, that feeling which Osip Mandelstam called nostalgia for a world culture.

Nostalgia it must remain. To the extent that a world culture can actually exist, it can only be banal. It wears a J. R. Ewing T-shirt. As nations acquire individuality, they must become less knowable. To grow up is to grow apart. The best that Australia can do, with regard to Britain and all the other European nations still less lucky — the best that it can do even with regard to America, which sounds so close but is really further away than anywhere — is to welcome the necessary disjunction, to construct strong and airy bridges, to make light of it.

The Australian poets of today may legitimately complain about the world and their country's place in it, but they can no longer complain about their place in their country. The days when they were not taken seriously are over. Now, in a land gone mad about art, they are taken so seriously that they should beware. Australia is in danger of producing an artistic class. In the nineteenth century, the ideal of an Australian art-form was one which did not leave the people out. The poets wrote ballads not because they couldn't do otherwise, but because they sought democracy. With high culture in Australia increasingly well taken care of, not to say pampered, nevertheless the old challenge still nags. This year, as in any other year, the publishing event in Australian poetry is the latest, unimpeachable edition of C. J. Dennis's *Sentimental Bloke*. When an Australian poet writes something as genuinely popular as that again, the critics at home will at last have something to write abroad about.

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where "the Antipodes are fabulously said to dwell". Others jeered at them clinging like caterpillars and lizards upside-down.

Among the earliest and best-known accounts is de Foigny's *Jacques Sadenz*, Gabriel de Foigny was a defrocked Frenchman, who taught languages in Geneva, where he died in 1692. His Australia is quite fantastic: Max Ernst and Raymond Roussel would have approved. Sadenz is shipwrecked somewhere on the Australian coast. He lives there for thirty-five years and describes a country inhabited by a race of hermaphrodites ("rational androgynes"), and another race of half-men, half-women, who have striped legs. Here we find inventors who create birds and dogs from mousetail dust, who grow flowers from lifeless pieces of wood, and who make themselves invisible for two hours at a time; there are winged horses with claws; camels with cavities large enough to hold two men, instead of humps; bears with each foot as large as the whole animal; fish resembling eagles with twelve-foot wingspan; and so on. Not even de Foigny could imagine a kangaroo, but he has red, green, yellow and blue sheep.

And yet this is not as startling as an Italian version or vision of Australia, published in 1749 and entitled *Illustrations de la Carte de la Nouvelle Australie*. *Zaccaria Seriman's* hilarious *Viaggio di Forno* (*Without Affinity to Forno Australis*). Everything is normal with Seriman's Australians. They wear European clothes and live in palaces and comfortable homes filled with European furniture, and have the usual domestic animals at their feet—but they themselves have monkey's faces. Mercifully, there has never been an English edition, although the hero is an Englishman. Like other imaginary voyages the book pretends to be a translation from an unpublished English manuscript, a reflection in part of Britain's sea-dominance; and like de Foigny's *Jacques Sadenz*, Seriman's Australia went through many editions in many languages.

Gulliver's Travels (1726) was another best-seller. Swift appears to have known something of contemporary exploration, particularly the buccaneer William Dampier mentioned in the preface (his *New Voyage Around the World* had appeared in 1697). To aid the suspension of any lingering disbelief in the reader, Swift included maps in his novel, and other apparently authentic information. Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) is shown and mentioned in the fifth paragraph. Swift had the largest ocean in the world at the tip of his pen. Where then does he locate Lilliput, with its treacherous emperor's palace? At 30° 2' south—which doesn't exactly match Lilliput on his map—the island is inland, somewhere in South Australia, perilously close to Adelaide. (Swift's term "Jaboo", incidentally, has become a regular Australianism for someone on-couch, a fatbag.)

As the century grew that a South Land existed—called "New Holland", by the eighteenth century—it prompted a wave of bizarre utopias, most of them beginning with a fortunate shipwreck. Denis Vairasse's *History of Severnaria: A People of the South-Continent*, published in French in 1682, has the narrator, Captain Siden, who lived fifteen years among them, describe Severnaria as "the perfect model for government" with a landscape resembling a Queensland tourist brochure: dry and sandy, climate excellent, abundance of all things essential to life. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this sonny utopia is the author's maniacal anagrams: Siden from Denis, Severnaria from Vairasse. It too went into many editions and translations. *Miscellaneous Anecdotes*, a medley of imaginative writings of (73), tells of a man marooned for twenty years on a place called New Athens (subtitled: *In Terra Australia incognita*), with an account of "the Laws, Manners, Religion and Customs of that Country". It is said to be the work of Charles Gildon, a hack loathed by Pope. Gildon's utopia has no lawyers, apothecaries or needy poor, and only twelve physicians. This guarantees permanent peace, tranquillity and health. It only remains to report that the very opposite to Gildon's dream has occurred in Australia.

Alarmed at the free-thinking behind some of these utopias the moralists made of sterner stuff moved in. Henry Neville, for example, provides an interesting story with *The Isle of Pines*—nothing about trees, but everything

about Mr George Pine. It begins as a paradise. Pine is shipwrecked off the coast of Australia. All have drowned except Pine and four women, and one is black. To build a community Pine is forced into polygamy. Working overtime he succeeds beyond his wildest dreams. In less than 150 years the community numbers some ten or twelve thousand, all speaking good English. Unfortunately, like all utopian societies it has its dark side: repeated absences from the monthly Bible assemblies are put to death.

Imaginary voyages to Australia continued long after the European occupation. There was even a hopeful utopia published as late as 1841. Vaso José d'Aguir was a civil servant in Lisbon, and in his one and only book he describes an imaginary visit to New South Wales. Optimism and enterprise fill his pages. In d'Aguir's dream the new world would have none of the stagnant evils of Europe.

Paradoxically, James Cook, who "discovered" the Southern Continent in 1770 by raising the flag and charting the east coastline, was sceptical of its existence until he had seen it with his own two eyes ("Isaac, you shall land first"). The shape which had for so long struggled in the net of the fabled continents became fixed, and its full immensity—now apparent emptiness in an ocean of emptiness—was revealed. To think that it had taken more than a thousand years to find such a place. Was it the world's largest island or the smallest continent? Either way it was the only one wholly in the Southern Hemisphere, a geographical fact which would forever draw attention to itself. Possessing its own clear shape, always huge, it remains to this day—as we will see—hypnotically strange on the world maps and in the consciousness of the Northern Hemisphere.

To the Pacific explorer La Perouse, the achievement of Cook "had left nothing to those who might follow". Cook was as plain and empirical as his name: among the many who mention his *Journals*, Stendhal would doubtless have been impressed by their matter-of-factness. But Cook's account of his great voyages also excited the imaginations of Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge: passages from *The Ancient Mariner* are clearly taken from the *Journals*. Captain Cook was synonymous with time and distance. He even assumes this form in 1951 with wig and tricorn in Calvino's novel, *The Cloven Viscount*, hailing aboard the hero, Dr Telemoney. "The sailors intoned an anthem, 'Oh, Australia', and the doctor was hunched on board astride a barrel of *carissime*. Then the ships drew anchor."

Several curious things happened after Cook and the subsequent European occupation of Australia in 1788. After all those centuries of imagining a South Land in the sea, and centuries more of arduous exploration to prove its existence, once the Antipodes was settled, old habits and "facts" were reversed. It was noticed that all the rivers ran into the sea—and these were large rivers in a shockingly dry continent. It was assumed their source must be an inland sea, and such a lake (in the European style) would give some reason or use for the vast interior.

The idea took hold, and like the original Southern Continent of the settlers' forefathers, it assumed the proportions of myth—land now exchanged for imaginary water. Expeditions of stubborn half-crazy men went trudging across uncharted oceans of burning sand and stones searching for it, the Inland Sea, and many were lost or speared by Aborigines or perished from thirst. So insistent was this dream of a lake and green pastures that even after an exhausted explorer, such as Charles Sturt, reached its supposed location and found nothing but desert with scarcely a blade of grass, he could still report that it was probably still there. Ironically, the only lake of any significance in the interior is below sea-level and almost always bone-dry: the phonetically apt Lake Eyre.

The other curious development was also to do with European ways of seeing. From the Middle Ages onwards the dictum "all swans are white" had become enshrined in text books of logic. Based on millions of sightings in the Northern Hemisphere this standard example of induction by innumeration—one of the pillars of Western philosophy—was overturned by the sightings in Australia of black swans, and so vindicated the misgivings of Hume. The Antipodes began living up to its name.

There was a new world of fauna and other surprising objects. The improbable kangaroo, of course, which would inspire the surrealists, and allowed Thomas Mann to describe a philosopher, and Chekhov a pregnant woman, as "kangaroo-shaped"; and reports reached Europe of a flat, crescent-shaped piece of hardwood down there, which, when thrown in the air in a certain way, would actually come back and land in the thrower's hand. Evocative new nouns entered the English language, such as *escapoe* (said originally to have applied to French convicts from New Caledonia escaping to Australia), *dingo*, *bumerang*, and to readers in congested hyperbores they would represent faraway, almost comprehensible space.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, a few writers left their desks and made the long voyage to see for themselves. In the public gardens at Bathurst beyond the Blue Mountains a bronze plaque outside the ladies' lavatories commemorates "the furthest point west that Charles Darwin reached in 1832". Trollope and Mark Twain were early arrivals; Trollope to visit his son working as a jackero in the back-blocks. Conrad, whose first command was *Imagok* in Sydney, stepped ashore many times; Stevenson ("when I think of Melbourne I writt"), regularly stayed at the Union Club in Sydney where some of his belongings can still be seen in a glass case; Kipling spent a few days in Melbourne in 1891 (*Plain Tales from the Hills* had been banned by the public library for its impropriety, although the newspapers kept pestering him to report the Melbourne Cup); Lawrence wrote *Kangaroo* in a shack on the coast south of Sydney.

Hardly any point in listing these early tourists, except to show that they were very few in number, and almost entirely Anglo-Saxon. The one European of note was the master of the artificial landscape, Raymond Russel, who arrived in Melbourne in 1920 in an ocean liner end raved about kangaroo soup.

So much for the Northern Hemisphere. What is most noticeable to the casual reader down here is the way "Australia" was used by imaginative writers, writing about a country they had never seen. After a while the Australian experience the vague feeling of supplying a metaphor for others. And that is perhaps how it should be. Australia is a convenient continent. Write the word and it instantly conjures up great distances; or it can be tossed in for the strange pleasure of its familiar shape, as when W. H. Auden in Iceland spotted it from a bus, in a patch of snow. Australia can be seen in the mind's eye in its entirety—"a great island shape", says William Gaddis in *The Recognition*. It allows John Updike writing a story in the quiet of New England to give someone poetic leper spots "in the same relation to one another as Australia and Tasmania", or Nabokov's neurotic character in *Invitation to a Beheading* to measure his remaining life after a stroke as the size ("I felt gigantic at times") of Australia. Canada or the Soviet Union or New Zealand would not have been appropriate for those purposes.

"Whenever one sees Australia on the map, one's heart leaps with pleasure: kangaroo, boomerang!" In declaring these feelings, Andrei Sinyavsky in *A Voice from the Chorus* echoes Conrad's narrator in *The Heart of Darkness*; at the time he was staring into the distance beyond the wire, in a labour camp, east of Moscow. The Russians are connoisseurs of the low horizon. In another map, this time on fictitious linen, we find Oshp Mandelstam in *The Egyptian Stamp* comparing "the airy outlines of Aryan Europe... with inexpressive Australia".

Russian literature is littered with kangaroos: from Ehrenburg to Chekhov's notebooks, in Mandelstam and Nabokov (who also has someone in Berlin savaged by a dingo), to Alekseyev's recent novel titled *Kangaroo*, though some equals "the implacable kangaroo of laughter" of Laurence. A superb word, William Cass tells us in *Overwinter's Luck*. "Kangaroo" has a verb-like energy, and seems to carry with it the oddity of some fantasy imagined world. In Australian literature, kangaroos are few and far between.

The curve of the earth which seems to put Australia further "down under" is often used for convenient effect by European writers. There is always someone being packed off down there to the end of the earth, in the way

the overcrowding of British prisons was solved in the eighteenth century—with Mr Micawber, in *Wolf Solent*, in Henry Green's *Living*; recently William Golding has been transporting whole boatloads. And Oscar Wilde does it with special relish. Non-English writers too have found Australia convenient for disposing of unwanted characters; there they can be safely forgotten. "We shouldn't be seeing them again..." says Céline of a couple of English girls. When Isaac Bashevis Singer writes in one of his stories, "After that charlatan left—I think he went to Australia..." the vagueness of "I think" fits the uncertain future in such a far-away place. Shady characters re-emerge, as "the legendary lost uncle from Australia" in *The Tin Drum*. Some come and go of their own free will. Robert Musil has the talkative Herr Doktor Arnheim in *The Man without Qualities* "at home on racetracks and golf-links not only in Europe but also in Australia...". When Australia appears in European literature it is often with a qualifying prefix, such as *also* in Australia, or *even* Australia, or *somewhere* in Australia. Musil's "but also" is a natural underlining of distance, and curves the reader's mind. When Thomas Mann is unable to simply write "Australia", but "the land of Australia", he suggests a slight perplexity, as though the Southern Continent had just been discovered and found to be snail, and the lofty view that it was peripheral to his world anyway.

The term "down under" originated in the Northern Hemisphere and the corresponding sensation of being above and looking down has encouraged a certain condescension, and, when added to a few historical factors, outright, or rather, downright repugnance—in English literature especially. Enough to say that Australians are seen as larrikins by Kipling, barbarians by Robert Graves, bigots by D. H. Lawrence (and undisciplined looters by T. E. Lawrence), drunkards by Dos Passos, spokesmen of slang by Proust, while the less said about the views of the Naipaul brothers and by Oscar Wilde (in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*) the better. These are stereotypes and can just as easily boomerang. More interesting, and appropriate to the South Land, is to notice how the enormous invisibility of the place, once the subject of geological myth, has been watered down and become a source for more elaborate literary myths.

Borgea, always with one foot in the Northern Hemisphere, imagines a man setting to verse the entire face of the planet. By 1941, he "had already despatched a number of acres of the State of Queensland...". The invisibility of that far-removed, pedantically named land gives an edge of credibility to the project.

He read me certain long-winded passages from his Australian section, and at one point praised a word of his own coinage, the colour "tealstewite", which he felt "actually suggests the sky, an element of utmost importance in the landscape of the continent Down Under."

As might be expected, Calvino used Australia for a similar purpose. We find the narrator of *Cosmicomics* obsessively reeling off all the marks and signs in the universe: the eyes in a peacock's tail, the cornice of a tomb's pediment, the badly inked tail of the letter R. To emphasize the teeming extent of the signs, a city is mentioned, seemingly at random: on a tattered wall on the Melbourne docks he sees one piece of flaking among the eight hundred thousand. In another story Calvino again leaps over the Equator: "I met her, much later, at Canberra in 1912, married to a certain Sullivan". There, a double invisibility is at work: the distant Australian capital existed in 1912 only as a few stilted lines and circles on a drawing board.

A single word in a sentence does the trick. It was insistently understood by the artist of space and false perspective, de Chirico, when he turned to novel writing. *Habdomeros* (1929) straightaway opens with a building "reminiscent of a German consulate in Melbourne". Nearby Venice or Chicago with its clearly would not do. "Melbourne" and "German consulate" project the story as a deliberate, "false" creation: those melancholy shadows of the heavy building, not many pedestrians.

De Chirico then comments—and echoes the shared assumptions of the Northern Hemisphere—that this was a "purely personal association on the part of Habdomeros".

Grasslands by Gerald Murnane

Four times during his life my father tried to escape into grasslands.

In the second-last year of the Second World War, when he was forty years old and living with his wife and three small sons near the east bank of Darebin Creek in the north of Melbourne County, he decided he was so deeply in debt that he would have to run away. Most of his debts were owed to unlicensed bookmakers who would do no more than write off his accounts when they learned he had run away.

My father travelled with his family by train across the grasslands north-west of the city of Melbourne, then through a gap in the Great Divide just west of Mount Macedon, then through hills and grasslands to the inland city of Bendigo.

He and his wife and sons lived for four years in three different rented cottages between Bendigo Creek and Huntly Race. He had probably intended to give up betting when he moved to this new district, but he became friendly with trainers of horses and with professional punters and bookmakers both licensed and unlicensed. At the age of forty-four, when his eldest son was nine years old, my father once again was so deeply in debt that he decided to flee.

This time he fled south-west towards the coast. He and his wife sat in the front seat of a furniture van beside the driver while the three sons sat in the back of the van on the faded cushions from the couch and the two chairs that the family called the lounge suite.

The man drove his crowded van carefully through the hills between the city of Bendigo and the inland city of Ballarat, and then from Ballarat into the grasslands known as the Western District. The family travelled for most of the afternoon through these grasslands. At dusk they stepped a few kilometres short of the Southern Ocean at the house my father had arranged beforehand to rent from a farmer for two shillings a week. This was in the district between Buckley's Creek and Curdies River and only a few kilometres from where my father had been born.

The house was in a corner of one of the farmer's paddocks. No one had lived in the house for nearly a year. It had no bathroom or laundry and no sink or stove in the kitchen. When the van-driver saw the inside of the house he said without being asked that he would drive the family free of charge back to Bendigo that same night if they wanted to go back. The driver did not know that my father could not go back.

In 1951 my father was as old as I am today. He was living with his wife and three sons in the district where the eldest son had been born. He was living for the first time in a house that he could say was his own.

The house was in the district between the Moonee Ponds and the Merri, in the north of Melbourne County. My father's eldest son supposed that the family would remain in that district, which was his native district. The eldest son supposed that his father would not sell the first house he had bought. On warm evenings the son sat beside the rectangular brick fishpond behind the house and waited for the red fish to drift to the surface of the green water. In 1951 the son, who was twelve years old, understood that the house appeared a shabby house among the neighbouring houses, but he believed the fishpond in the backyard distinguished the house. The son looked forward to the years when he would be a boy-man still living in the house in his native district. In those years the boy-man would invite to his house the girl-woman who was still in 1951 only a girl while he was still only a boy. The boy-man could not have invited the girl-woman to a shabby and undistinguished house, but he would have been justified in asking her to sit with him beside the fishpond. On warm evenings he and she would sit quietly waiting for the red fish to appear in the green water that was safely enclosed by a wall of bricks on the soil of my native district.

In 1951, after he had lived for only a year in the first house he had bought, my father was once again deeply in debt to bookmakers. By the first week of November 1951 he had arranged to become the manager of a farming property in a district of grasslands between the Ovens River and Reedy Creek, east of the inland city of Wangaratta. He had not seen the property, and he had only met the owner for an hour while the man was visiting the city of Melbourne. My father was so anxious to get away that he left with his family and their furniture before the house had been sold. The sale was placed in the hands of an estate agent who was one of my father's racing acquaintances.

The family travelled in November from the district between the Moonee Ponds and the Merri along the Hume Highway to Wangaratta. The three sons sat in the back of the van on the same old cushions that they had sat on three years before. The dog Belle sat beside them, chained to a leg of the upside-down kitchen table. The boys took turns at holding on their knees a cylindrical biscuit-tin full of water. In the water was a pair of goldfish, thought to be one male and one female.

In the morning while the furniture van was being loaded, the sky had been filled with clouds and the wind had been cool. But around midday the van crossed the Great Divide and the sky was suddenly clear. The Hume Highway at that time was a winding road with only two lanes for the slow-moving furniture van was followed by motor-cars around most of the winding sections of the road. The boys in the back of the van looked down through the windscreen of each motor-car and studied the faces of the people. If the faces seemed friendly the boys waved. Sometimes the two younger boys lifted up the dog Belle and forced her to wave her paw. The two younger boys wanted to devise more tricks to amuse the people. But the eldest boy, who was almost thirteen, had begun to feel somewhat ashamed that he and his family should be seen with all their belongings heaped up in a truck and the first home they had ever owned far back on the road behind them.

By mid-afternoon the sun was hot. The eldest boy recognized the dry heat of the inland that he had not felt since he had left Bendigo three years before. When the van turned aside from the empty back road in the district between the Ovens and Reedy Creek, the faces and clothes of the boys and the fabric of the cushions were covered with golden dust as fine as face-powder. In the biscuit-tin the water had a creamy scum.

Half a kilometre back from the back road, a house stood among fruit trees and green lawns. The house looked to have at least six large rooms under its broad roof of dark-green iron. The doors and windows of the house were deep in shadow beneath a veranda that ran along the front and one side of the house. Much of this veranda was hidden behind the green leaves of creepers.

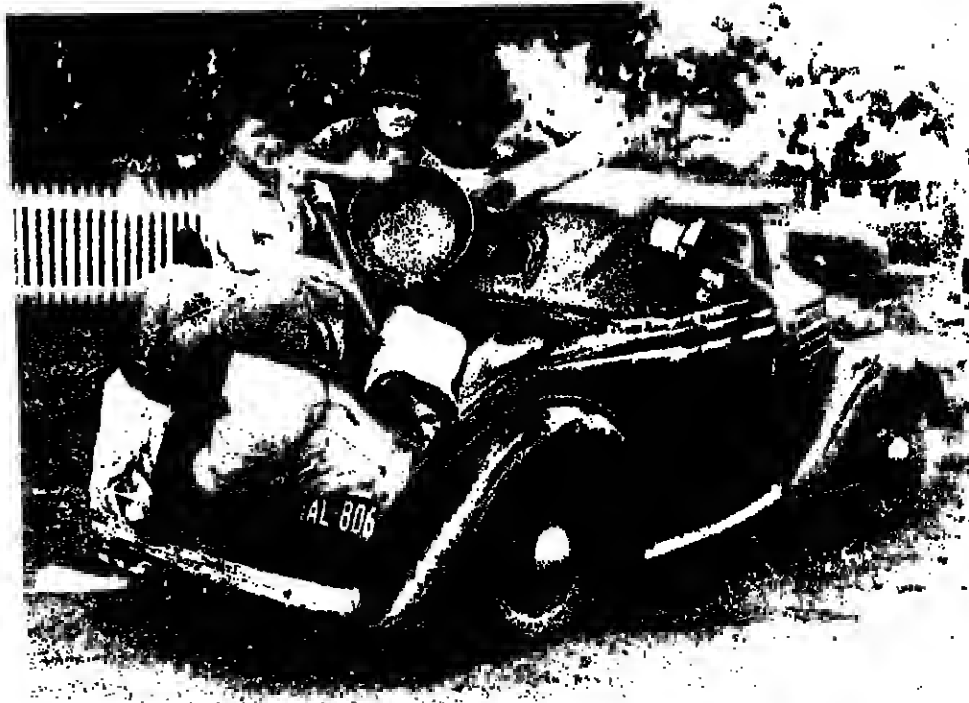
The eldest boy got to his feet at the back of the van. When he stood up, dust fell out of the folds of his clothes. He looked at the sprawling house of brown-red weatherboards under a dark-green roof and a cloudless sky of deep blue. He saw that this could well have been one of the houses he had dreamed of himself living in after he had married and gone to live in grasslands.

A woman came out from among the green creepers at the side of the house. She had grey hair, and she seemed old to the boys in the back of the van, but she would have been no older than I am today. She handed an orange to each of the three boys and said a few friendly words. The boys looked her from out of their masks of golden dust.

The woman went to the front of the van and introduced herself to my father, who had stepped down from the cabin. She was the wife of the owner of the property, and she lived in the house with the creepers on the veranda. If my father would direct the van-driver around the next corner to the driveway and then on towards the farm buildings, he would find the farm-manager's house empty and waiting with the key in the door.

The woman went back in among the creepers. My father climbed back into the van and the van drove on.

The house that was waiting for us was a weatherboard cottage of four small rooms. The rooms were clean, and the kitchen had a sink and a stove, but what astonished my father and my mother was the van-driver and even the three boys was that the cottage was adjoined on two sides by yards.



Three amateur prospectors on their way to a mini-goldrush in Wedderburn, Victoria. The photograph is taken from Australia: Beyond the Dreamtime by Thomas Kennedy, Patsy Adams-Smith and Robyn Davidson (224pp. BBC Books. £14.95. 0 563 20539 8). The book based on the BBC television series. Each of the three authors contributes a long essay. Kennedy looks at the early days of Australia and the last days of Ned Kelly; Adams-Smith draws on her own childhood experience during the Depression when unemployment in Australia was the highest in the world; and Davidson, from a younger generation, writes in "The Mythological Crucible" about her family, about Aborigines, and about the middle class which "cannot think past the quarter-acre plot, the two cars and the hefty mortgage".

At the front of the house and at one of its sides a small lawn grew—a patch of green grass two or three paces wide. The lawn was fenced around with a strong wire-and-timber fence that was clearly meant to keep out wandering cattle. But on the other two sides of the cottage no fence stood and no grass grew; the brown weatherboard walls of the cottage itself served as part of the outer fence of a nuzz of sheepyards connected with the silver-grey shearing shed about forty paces away.

When the parents looked inside the cottage they learned that one of the walls adjoining the sheepyards was the wall of the room that would be their lounge room. The single window of this room looked out at the sheepyards and the shearing shed. My mother stepped across the bare boards of the empty room and pushed open the single pane of the window. She put her head through the window and looked across the yards. The surface of the yards was finely trampled with dust and dried sheep-dung. The sill of the window was low enough for a sheep to have rested its front feet there and to have looked inside in the same way that my mother had looked out.

The driver of the van did not offer to drive the family back to the city of Melbourne; and even if he had offered, my father would not have gone back. My mother, however, announced to my father that she would not live in that house. She would consent to store the furniture in the house and to eat and sleep there until my father had arranged to get the family back to some district near Melbourne; but she would unpack only what was needed for cooking and eating meals, because she was not going to live in the cottage by the sheepyards.

The driver and my father and the three boys unloaded the van. My mother unpacked the tea-chests that contained crockery and cutlery and pillows and bed-coverings. But for two weeks while the family lived in the cottage nothing else was unpacked—except that the eldest boy took out the glass fish-tank that his mother had bought for him in his last days in the district between the Moonee Ponds and the Merri. He rested the glass tank on a nailed-down tea-chest in the lounge room under the window that looked out on to the dirt and the dried dung, and he carried jugs of water from the rainwater tank outside the house and filled the fish-tank and poured in the water from the biscuit-tin and the two red fish that had survived in it.

Fifteen days after the family had arrived in the district between the Ovens and Reedy Creek, they loaded their belongings into another van. Most of the tea-chests had not been opened since the day when the van had brought the family and their belongings inland from the district between the Moonee Ponds and the Merri. The fish-tank had been emptied again and the fish poured into the biscuit-tin.

The house with the fishpond in the backyard had been sold. The father had not even considered going back. The family was going to live in a district where none of them had been before—the district of swamps and tea-tree scrub between Scotchman's Creek and Elster Creek, on the opposite side of Melbourne from the district between the Moonee Ponds and the Merri. A racing acquaintance of the father was a builder of houses in the swampy district. He would build a cheap house for the family on a cheap block of land among the tea-trees and the Watsonia lilies and the prickly manuka scrub. But the building of the house might take six months. In the meanwhile the family would live separately with relatives in districts on three sides of the city of Melbourne. The eldest son would be sent to the district between the Moonee Ponds and the Merri. He had told the girl in his native district that he was going to live for the rest of his life far inland, but he was creeping back to a corner of his native district after all.

In 1960, when he was nine years older than I am now, my father made his last attempt to escape into grasslands.

He was still living in the district between Scotchman's Creek and Elster Creek, but only his wife and his youngest son were still living with him. He was not in debt. He had fallen deeply in debt four years before, but at that time he had chosen not to run away. He had gone to work by night as well as by day to pay back his debts to bookmakers.

For four years my father had worked at two jobs. On many nights during those years he had slept for only two or three hours. At the end of the four years he had paid his debts but he was tired. He sold his house in the district between Scotchman's Creek and Elster Creek, and he and his wife and their youngest son went to live between Sutherland's Creek and Hovell's Creek, on the edge of the plains known as the Western District and half-way between the city of Melbourne and my father's native district. My father told his friends that he wanted not to work so hard in future.

In the winter of that year my father bought a motor-car. He drove in his motor-car all around the district between the Hopkins River and Buckley's Creek where he had been born and had spent part of his childhood. Then he returned to his home on the edge of the plains and fell ill and died quietly, after which his body was buried on the west bank of the Hopkins River, near where that river flows into the sea.

JAN 20 1988

Forced conciliations

Peter Conrad

TIM BONYHADY
The Calanini Image: Australian painting 1800-1880
111pp, with plates, Australian National Gallery / Ellipsyd Press, 137-139 Regent Street, Chippendale, Australia 2008
0949250254
Australian Calanini Paintings in the Australian National Gallery
271pp, Oxford University Press, £80,
0642 897586

The oldest continent was the last to arrive in European history, and when that happened Australia seemed to begin the world all over again. There were, accordingly, allegories about the invention of art in this new, harsh place - fables describing how men subdued reality by representing it. One such allegory is a bark painting in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. It shows Wirri, an ancestor of the Gumatj people, treading tracks through the scorched, ochre desert in quest of pigments - clays and soft stones - which he bequeathed to his descendants for ceremonial use. The aborigine derives the means of his art from the earth: the land depicts itself. But for the invading European, representation could not be home-made. It was imported, and applied to the local reality as an infliction. A painting by Robert Dowling in the Linneum Art Gallery dramatizes the procedure. His modest allegory is called "Early Efforts - Art in Australia". A gaggle of school children watch a boy at an easel sketch a black man, who poses strictly with spear and boomerang. Of course the nascent artist will not be able to paint what he sees. The blackman will either be sentimentalized as a guileless primitive or satirized as a degenerate throwback; by Dowling himself he's treated as an ethnological specimen, anatomized in paint. Dowling painted the Tasmanian aborigine as a mnemonic prescription, because they would soon be extinct, but as far as his art is concerned they are already obsolete: he used European models, and was not even able to get their physical proportions right. A chubby infant in the foreground of his picture idly hacks at a stick; art is another of the white man's weapons, conquering by misrepresentation.

Colonial painting in Australia is a digest of such distortions. The artist comes as a usurper. Benjamin Duterrau, recording George Augustus Robinson's "Conciliation" of the last Tasmanians in 1840 - he kured them into exile on a miserable island in the Bass Strait, where they died off while being retrained as a Christian peasantry - deployed the European grand manner against the refractory new world. Robinson poses with uplifted fingers like an annunciatory angel from a Renaissance picture; but he is let down by his dumpy figure and his floppy hat, while the natives he has supposedly conciliated look sceptical, frowning the beads which they no doubt have to give up or squating among their hounds and wallabies to chew on sticks. The moral heroism Duterrau admired in Robinson cannot make itself at home here. When art conciliated the natives, it did so by dressing them up as Europeans - John Michael Crossland in 1854 painted Ninnultera giving proof of his "progress at civilization" by brandishing a cricket bat, and James Wilson in 1838 made a portrait of a girl called Gunbal in an improvised kangaroo-fur wrap with a bow-ribboned turban on her head and her hair protruding in buns above her ears. This, as Tim Bonyhady dryly comments, was not traditional tribal fashion.

Art's campaign against reality, having re-

designed the natives, then advanced to wishful fantasy about the lives of the white settlers. Harden S. Melville in 1850-1 painted a squatter reading a letter from his far-off family. A dewy-eyed dog gazes dolefully at him; the floor is littered with butchered wild-life; an idiotic aborigine with a feathered head-dress which makes him look like Mum Friday proudly displays the coin he has received for delivering the mail. If Duterrau's "Conciliation" attempts to neoclassicize the history painting down under, Melville tries the same for the Victorian domestic idyll. But the facts must first be revised: as Bonyhady points out, bush huts were cobbled together crudely from bark and slabs; Melville passes off a lumpy as a home by making it implausibly rustic, with a tree trunk as a beam and an open door in the shape of a Gothic arch.

The landscape outside Melville's door also had to be accommodated, as in Duterrau's worst conciliation. Art makes by matching, by assigning objects to prototypes; Australian nature could only be comprehended by being classified as a version of European scenery. John Glover, emigrating to Tasmania in 1830, declared himself "delighted" by "the expectation of finding a beautiful new world - new landscapes, new trees, new flowers, new animals, birds, etc". But art is baffled by physical novelty, and what Glover depicted was an old world: a transplanted and incongruous pastoral. His "Castles in Italy", one of the Canberrra paintings catalogued by Bonyhady, recalls his Claudean model. He had visited Umbria in 1818; he painted this renaissance of it in 1841, ten years after settling in Tasmania. Bonyhady believes it has subtly adapted rhesusism to the colony: "the trees have something of the apennine of eucalypts and the hills have the blondness of many of Glaver's Tasmanian landscapes". But gum-trees never writhe and ripple, as the serpentine trunks at Glover's Otricoli do, and Tasmania has no crumbling hilltop ruins, glowing in a honeyed sun. Rather I think that in Tasmania Glover was always painting a dream of Europe. His "Patterdale Landscape with Rainbow" admits its own ironic displacement. Here are the scruffy, straggly truths of the Tasmanian bush - skeletal fallen timber, a mangy paddock, a settler alone with his dog in the wilderness. But Glover has evoked an imaginary, Wordsworthian bome by calling the property Patterdale (and it lay, in northern Tasmania, under a migratory peak christened Ben Lomond); the rainbow which bestrides the bereft acreage promises reunion with this world elsewhere.

Glover's paintings find their pretext in English literature: "My Harvest Home" with its lambent hay-bales celebrates nature as a Keatsian granary. Henry Short, who came from England to Melbourne to prospect for gold in 1852, made a habit of such yearning allusions. To "Victorian Happy Home" he

Woop Woop

The back-track Trebizond of everyone, it is in a disc of star-fish where the lakes are Balatons and the muslin-valenced ladies bring library books to town as if it were no more than six weeks since their husbands died.

Here start the open-shirted young sophisticates whose fathers took the franchise for a new variety of Cola, the ones whose poems and whose gossip-columns are made the more intelligently decadent by their need to tame the capital.

Out of his famished pores come anecdotes of men with recipes for "cockatoo-au-vin" of fossickers in muddy dams laming Irish tunes on one-string fiddles - rumours started here sell beer ten thousand miles from "Truth to Tell".

Juggernauts are planned to pass this very place when six-lane highways from the Bicentennial stride beside the boardings, but the point of all this opening-up must be our doubt that such a life will stay to welcome us.



William Ford's 'At the Hanging Rock', 1875, is taken from Tim Bonyhady's Images in Opposition: Australian Landscape painting 1801-1890 (192pp, Oxford University Press, £29.90, 0 19334502 8).

affixed Byron's line "Fair clima, where every season smiles", and to a picture of Australia's inverse summer - "Colonial Fruits and Flowers in January" - he attached Spencer's description of the Garden of Adonis with its mythic bounty: "There is continual harvest here... His cornucopious of local produce ornately fence off the dangerous wastes beyond: 'In Memory of the Lamented Heroes of the Victorian Exploration' lays a table with fruit and flowers attended by flickering butterflies and chubby putti wrestling on the stems of dishes; the cup commemorating Burke, Wills and Gray - who perished returning from their trek across the continent - is rarely visible among the surfeit. Short paints abundance in order to deny the lethal desert's existence. Behind the banquet table looms a spectral forest, which the grape tendrils twiningly obscure."

Like Shart, Eugene von Guérard sought legitimacy for Australian nature in English literature. When in 1866 he issued a lithograph of his painting "North-east View from the Top of Mt Kosciusko", he added a Byronic tag saluting mountains as temples surpassing the "columns and idol-dwellings [of] Goth or Greek", and the text which glossed his "Fern-tree Gully, Dandenong Ranges, Victoria" laboured to see the place as an arboreal European cathedral, much as Melville had reshaped the squatter's hut into a rough Gothic chapel: the gully was "one of the loveliest cloisters" built by nature, the man-ferns qualifying as "columns" with the wind "chanting a thunder-psalm". The metaphors beseech benediction for a world unknown and therefore unhalloved.

The habit of relativistically checking Australia

Although an ancient and austere referent it is younger than the harboured megalopolis. It backs, since every journey to simplicity is inland and the parrots dress in ever-brighter greens and scarlets the emptier the lakes they lap.

The movie industry could not exist without it: wasp-waisted girls are seen riding after Schumann to the soup-tin letter-box to hear that London wants their novels, and following riots in Europe, amuse their company just naming its odd name.

Perhaps it has no future; we know already, despite remoteness and the different sorts of fly, it has suburban aspects: nobody here must wait a day to hire his favourite video and one of its sons read 'The Death of Virgil' through his Sunday School.

It is full of details we agree to love - the cat called Fortunata, the minestrone made in milk-churns, an aunt who mounted 'Tosca' in a hearing shed; outside town, it offers you the peace inside your mother's mind, the need to get away.

PETER PORTER

Defending Emma

Stephen Bann

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA
The Perpetual Orgy
Translated by Helen Lane
240pp, Faber, £9.95,
0571 145507
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE
The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert 1821-1857
Volume Two
Translated by Carol Cosman
435pp, University of Chicago Press, £21.95,
0226735109

The American critic W. J. T. Mitchell has recently observed that we are living in a "golden age of criticism". While the heady tide of theory mounts in the universities of Europe and America, the type of literature that used to be called "imaginative" has migrated to the peripheries of empire: such territories as South Africa, Australia and South America are now notable for their production of novels, poems, plays and films. Perhaps this situation is what gives Mario Vargas Llosa's study of Flaubert its particular charm. Here is a Latin American novelist explaining what Flaubert means to him. The tools are often the customary tools of criticism, but the perspective from which the first modern novelist is viewed is at the same time broader and more oblique than we might have expected.

This is in part because Vargas Llosa enables us to glimpse his personal history through the chinks of the critical study. The first part of the book is indeed a detailed account of the development of his "Unrequited Passion" for Madame Bovary. He first came across her in the cinematic guise of Jennifer Jones, on a "stifling hot summer night" in 1952. His second sighting was at the University of San Marcos, in Lima, when a French critic's "impassive" consideration of the centenary of the novel was violently interrupted by a student demonstration in favour of the Algerian revolution. But he finally bought the novel only in 1959, on his first arrival in Paris as a penniless writer. It was then, "in a tiny room in the Hotel Wetter, near the Musée Cluny", that the affair really began.

How did Vargas Llosa initially express his devotion to Emma Bovary and her creator? It is certainly evident that he read a great deal of

Flaubert criticism of the more traditional sort, at a time when the parting of the ways between *nouvelle critique* and its opponents had not yet taken place. *The Perpetual Orgy* is richly stuffed, especially in its middle sections, with details which he has gleaned from innumerable source studies of the immediate post-war period. There is, for example, a sympathetic re-enactment of Jean Pommier's study of the "Loursel affair" - "which brought before the bar of justice a man accused of having murdered his wife and a maid-servant so as to marry the woman he loved: a certain Esther de Bovary". A good deal more of this kind is added, as the name "Bovary", in all its possible variants, is tracked through the small print of nineteenth-century newspapers, even coming to rest at one point in Flaubert's maternal ancestry with a certain Anne de Boveri.

This Flaubert criticism of the old style forms a kind of sedimentary layer to Vargas Llosa's study. In its cheerful mixture of the categories of life and art, it doubtless recalls the author's own oddly assorted passions during the period. A Bolivian friend is reported as having told him, in late 1960: "You won't give an inch when it comes to Cuba or Flaubert." But Vargas Llosa has also lived through the rise of *nouvelle critique*, and the *nouveau roman*. He has seen his cherished Flaubert become the mascot of a group that took objectivity and neutral description as its watchwords, seemingly blind to the other aspects of his achievement. He has stood by while the heroes of fiction have been "shorn of all moral, historical, psychological grandeur", culminating in their ultimate deterioration in the works of Samuel Beckett, Nathalie Sarraute, or, "going further still, in the novels of a Philippe Sollers". Though he can see the germ of this process in Flaubert's written opinions, Vargas Llosa is willing to defend *Madame Bovary* to the last breath from the charge of beginning the rot.

It is this secondary line of defence that produces some of the most interesting ideas in this study. Vargas Llosa shows that he has learned from *nouvelle critique* to look closely at the features of Flaubert's style, and his sections on the "Four Times" of the novel and the various styles of narration are remarkably full and fine. None the less, this is a work which was originally published in 1974. Since that date, structuralists and post-structuralists have published

outstanding work on Flaubert. Sallars has begun to write novels displaying characters, rather than a mere "murmur of words". And we hardly need telling that the "stuffed parrot that had served Flaubert as a model for *Un Coeur simple*" is not as simple as all that. Vargas Llosa's study can be recommended as a good, though not indispensable guide to Flaubert. What makes it really invaluable, however, is the way it allows us to observe the strategies of literary criticism operating within a distinctive personal and historical context.

Vargas Llosa had before him the example of Sartre, who published in the early 1970s a biography of the writer which was both interminably long and (by general consent) a failure. Yet *The Family Idiot* is an enthralling

interesting failure. Unlike Helen Lane, who had Vargas Llosa's lively and brilliant prose to respond to in her excellent translation, Carol Cosman has Sartre's deliberately loose and unpublishable discourse to cope with. The division of the original French text into more manageable volumes has produced some anomalies, and the present book is only the first part of the original second volume, ending rather oddly with Sartre's protracted speculations on the relationship of Flaubert to Alfred Le Poittevin. Nevertheless, the edition will be complete eventually, and Sartre's ruminations on the bourgeois family will be available in this handsome English version, which, however, could well have benefited from the addition of an index.

Surrender to the spoiling

David Coward

CLAUDE ROY
L'Ami laintain
175pp, Paris: Gallimard, 68fr.
207070873 X

The friend is Stefan Stein, a German Jew who escapes the Nazi purges of the 1930s only to die, nearly fifty years on, at the hands of the Argentinian military junta, after a lifetime spent defending justice and law in a world which has little use for either. Etienne Archambaud, separated from him both by distance and history, remains in his provincial backwater, dominated by his mother and bullied by his brother, a victim of "other people's rhythms" and of his own rueful docility. Stefan, impelled by events, leaps from one frying-pan into another frying-pan but cannot avoid the fire. Etienne does not even jump, but the smoke brings tears to his eyes - not just for the waste but for man's eternal vulnerability to the unstoppable barbarism of it all.

For these parallel lives are the same life, just as all wars are the same war. Etienne remembers the fighting games he played as a boy and is unable to tell them apart from the religious massacres of the sixteenth century or the holocausts of the twentieth. Stefan faces his trials with courage and lucidity. Etienne, untested, worries about his own insurmountable meekness: is it genuine tolerance or merely indifference? What he admires in his friend is his pas-

sionate calm, a capacity for that "colère objective" which is also both the strength and weakness of Claude Roy's writing, where the oblique suggestion is preferred to the frontal attack. He does not convey the brutality of Stefan's fate through harrowing descriptions of murder and torture but captures it lucidly, poetically. In an intensely vivid incident which shows Stefan and a school friend, in the age of fourteen, humiliated on a river-bank by two blond youths who bear a sinister resemblance to Lunel and Hardy.

Roy is a master of echoes and parallels and reverberations which bind his story into a lament both for friendship and the human condition. A long life and a close involvement in the major traumas of our century have led him to conclude that we are the slaves and not the masters of history. Evil is endemic and, however loud we shout the name of justice and humanity, the cruelties of *Reelpolitik* go on bursting the bubble of civilized values. *L'Ami laintain* is a sunset book, an autumnal surrender to the spoiling power of the world. It has all the quiet dignity and telling understatement which are Roy's most engaging qualities as a novelist. It is sometimes said, rather dismissively, that he is simply too nice, that he stands back a shade too far, that he observes (rather as one of his heroes, Marivaux, does) in too passionless a way. In this sober, elegant and elegiac book, he nowhere suggests that the gift of friendship is an adequate compensation for the price Stefan and Etienne have to pay for it. And that is not nice, not nice at all.

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